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War an analysis of influence tactics used by  
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and the Viet Cong in South Vietnam

Pavlik, Thomas F.

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**OPERATIONAL SOCIAL INFLUENCE IN THE VIETNAM  
WAR: AN ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCE TACTICS USED BY  
THE U.S. MARINE'S COMBINED ACTION PROGRAM  
AND THE VIET CONG IN SOUTH VIETNAM**

by

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March 2011

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Anthony R. Pratkanis

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AN ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCE TACTICS USED BY THE U.S. MARINE'S  
COMBINED ACTION PROGRAM AND THE VIET CONG IN SOUTH  
VIETNAM**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

Shortly after Marine forces landed in Vietnam in March, 1965, leaders in the field began experimenting with pacification/combined action. Although this concept went directly against the military strategy of the top leaders, which involved unlimited combat operations, four Combined Action Platoons were formed into a Combined Action Company in the summer of 1965.

The Marine Corps Combined Action Program was viewed by many as one of the only successful pacification programs conducted in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. The CAP concept in Vietnam combined a squad of Marines and a platoon of South Vietnamese Popular Forces to assist villages in resisting VC influence. By combining forces and living inside the villages, the Marines believed they could win the “hearts and minds” of the villagers.

Although they may not have been aware that the science of social influence even existed, the Marines who were part of the CAP used several social influence tactics in their effort to gain the trust of the villagers and deny influence attempts from the VC. What they accomplished by chance should not be lost to history; it should be studied within the context of established social influence theory so future operations may benefit from their experience.

This study views the Combined Action Program conducted by the U.S. Marines in South Vietnam through a lens of the science of social influence. A social influence analysis is conducted using cognitive Centers of Gravity and specific social influence tactics. The analysis results provide an insight into which social influence tactics can be applied during counterinsurgency operations.



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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

III MAF	III Marine Amphibious Force
CAC	Combined Action Company
CAP	Combined Action Program
CAPs	Combined Action Platoon
CJCS	Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COG	Center of Gravity
GVN	South Vietnamese Government
FITD	Foot in the Door
FMFPAC	Fleet Marine Force Pacific
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
LT	Lieutenant
LTGen	Lieutenant General
LTCol	Lieutenant Colonel
MACV	Military Assistance Command Vietnam
NLF	National Liberation Front
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
PF	Vietnamese Popular Force
SGT	Sergeant
SIA	Social Influence Analysis
VC	Viet Cong

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. BACKGROUND

Beginning in 1950, the U.S. maintained a presence in Vietnam in an effort to stop the communist government in the North from taking over the anti-communist regime in the South. This presence consisted of mostly advisors, some high level military, yet no Marine ground forces.<sup>1</sup> That changed in 1965. Shortly after Marine forces landed in Vietnam in March of that year, leaders in the field began experimenting with pacification/combined action.<sup>2</sup> Although this concept went directly against the strategy of the top leaders of the military (including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), and Chief of Staff of the Army), which involved unlimited combat operations<sup>3</sup>, four Combined Action Platoons (CAPs) were formed into a Combined Action Company (CAC) in the summer of 1965.

The Marine Corps Combined Action Program (CAP) was viewed by many as one of the only successful pacification programs conducted in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War.<sup>4</sup> Pacification is defined as the acceptance of the government by the people and their cooperation with government forces. In South Vietnam, a village would be considered pacified once it was able to resist the influence of the Viet Cong (VC), provide its own security, and support the Government of South Vietnam (GVN).

The CAP concept in Vietnam combined a squad of Marines and a platoon of South Vietnamese Popular Forces (PFs) to assist villages in resisting VC influence. By combining forces and living inside the villages, the Marines believed they could win the “hearts and minds” of the villagers and gain intelligence on the movement of VC in return for security.

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<sup>1</sup> Jack Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The landing and the buildup, 1965* (Dept. of Defense, Navy Dept., 1978), xi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>3</sup> John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 2005), 152.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

Although they may not have been aware that the science of social influence even existed, the Lieutenants, Sergeants, and other Marines who were part of the CAP used several social influence tactics in order to gain the trust of the villagers and deny influence attempts from the VC. What they accomplished by chance should not be lost to history; it should be studied within the context of established social influence theory so future operations may benefit from their experience.

## **B. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this thesis is to determine what social influence tactics are effective to use during military operations, with a focus on counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. This thesis is a Social Influence Analysis (SIA)<sup>5</sup> to study operations conducted between the U.S. Marines and the VC in South Vietnam from 1965–1970.

The Science of Social Influence has used experiments, case studies, surveys, and other research designs to develop an understanding of conditions under which social influence is effective. When conducted on historical data, an SIA can provide insight into what social influence tactics were or were not effective, and then be applied to similar situations in the future. In 2005, Anthony Pratkanis and Doug Shadel conducted an SIA of how con criminals use social influence to perpetrate their crimes. This SIA resulted in policy recommendations and interventions that have been empirically shown to decrease victimization rates.<sup>6</sup> An SIA will be used here to answer the following questions

### **1. Primary Research Questions**

An understanding of which influence Centers of Gravity (COGs) should be the focus during counterinsurgency (COIN) operations could help military and civilian leaders reduce the time engaged in a conflict and increase the effectiveness of their

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony R. Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 119.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

influence campaign. The primary research question of this thesis is *which COGs<sup>7</sup> are most relevant to conducting a social influence campaign against an insurgency?*

Military leaders must have the necessary tools to be successful, whether they are fighting to destroy an enemy or fighting to win the hearts and minds of a population. Identifying which specific social influence tactics work, and under what conditions, will help leaders planning for COIN operations to be more efficient when choosing which tactics should be included in their influence campaigns. A second primary question is *when do specific social influence tactics work in an operational environment and which produce the most desired results?*

## **2. Secondary Research Questions**

Prior to answering the primary research questions, the research must answer a few preliminary questions. They are:

What was the CAP?

Was the CAP successful?

What social influence tactics used by the CAP Marines can be identified through a case study on the CAP, and under what conditions should they be attempted or avoided?

## **C. SCOPE**

This thesis will discuss the history of the CAP concept and its implementation in South Vietnam from 1965–1970, and then use the science of social influence to conduct an SIA. As part of the SIA, a Centers of Gravity (COG) analysis of the CAP will be conducted using the COGs cited by Anthony Pratkanis in his work *Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts*. It will then analyze the use of several documented and experimentally tested social influence tactics in an effort to determine their applicability to COIN operations. The results are intended to provide military commanders involved

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<sup>7</sup> Note: For the purpose of this thesis, the COGs used are not traditional COGs (i.e., Clauswitzian); rather, they are COGs proposed by Anthony Pratkanis, which can be used as focal point for a social influence campaign.



in current and future COIN operations with baseline knowledge to help determine which social influence COGs and tactics will be most useful to their specific operation.

#### **D. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

Chapter II, Literature Review, provides a brief history and description of the science of social influence. It discusses the main sources, theories, and theorists that will be used to conduct a social influence analysis of the CAP. Chapter II continues with a brief overview of the sources used for research on the CAP.

Chapter III, Methodology, is a short chapter on how the research for this thesis was conducted and how it will be applied to answer the thesis questions.

Chapter IV, The Combined Action Program is a history of the CAP and includes indicators of success.

Chapter V, Centers of Gravity Analysis, introduces each center of gravity that applies to social influence and provides examples of how the CAP or the VC exploited them.

Chapter VI, Social Influence Tactics used in South Vietnam, provides additional social influence tactics used with examples.

Chapter VI provides a conclusion for the research study, and includes a preliminary tool to be used to determine which tactics can be used in specific COIN situations. Additionally there are suggestions for applying some of the lessons learned in the future, and areas that warrant further analysis or research.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. THE SCIENCE OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Sociology, the study of society, can be traced back to the time of Plato (428–327 BC). Sociology looks at human social activity and attempts to apply research and knowledge to better social welfare. Some of the most notable sociologists since the 16th century are Auguste Comte (1798–1857), Karl Marx (1818–1883), and most recently Herbert Spencer (1820–1903).<sup>8</sup>

Psychology, the study of mind and behavior, can also be traced back to ancient civilizations. The first mention of the word in English was in 1693 in Steven Blankaart's *The Physical Dictionary*. In it he states, “Anthropoligia is the study of man or the doctrine concerning him, which is divided into two parts—Anatomy, which treats the body and Psychology, which treats the soul.”<sup>9</sup> Today the names Freud, Jung, and Maslow are all synonymous with psychology. Modern psychology examines both the mind and behavior, with a focus on cognition or mental processes. It should be noted that the discipline of social psychology (wherein social influence lies) is a sub discipline of psychology.<sup>10</sup>

Social psychology combines theories and empirical evidence from both sociology and psychology, then applies scientific methods and facts to study social phenomena. The science of social influence has been studied since the late nineteenth century. Much has been written on social influence and how it can be used to shape an individual's behavior, feelings and actions. Gordon Willard Allport, a prominent leader in studies on rumor (social influence tactic) defines social psychology as “a discipline that uses

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<sup>8</sup> Allan G. Johnson, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A User's Guide to Sociological Language*, 2nd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), 363–368.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew M. Colman, *A Dictionary of Psychology*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, USA, 2009), 619.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel T. Gilbert, Susan T. Fiske, and Gardner Lindzey, *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 4th ed. (Oxford University Press, USA, 1998), 4.

scientific methods to understand and explain how the thought, feeling and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other human beings.”<sup>11</sup>

A contemporary of Allport, Kurt Lewin is regarded as one of the founders of social psychology. He changed forever the understanding of experimental learning, leadership, action research, and group dynamics. Lewin empirically showed how human behavior is a product of one’s internal makeup and is affected by the environment in which the individual lives.<sup>12</sup> His field theory is focused on the power of the situation. He defines a field as the totality of coexisting facts that are conceived of as mutually interdependent. In order to understand one’s behavior (to understand is a precursor to influencing), his or her entire lifespace and surrounding environment must be taken into consideration.<sup>13</sup> Lewin’s work provided a foundation for modern research on social influence and showed how social interactions can be measured and studied.<sup>14</sup>

Both World Wars brought about exceptional research and advanced theories in the field of social influence. During and after the Second World War much work was done by Hovland<sup>15</sup>, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet<sup>16</sup>, and many others who researched the influence of propaganda, rumor, innuendo, mass communications, and other tactics. Yet, still, there not an abundance of literature directly associating specific military operations with the science of social influence.

Researchers have identified 107 individual social influence tactics. Pratkanis reviews all 107 in *The Science of Social Influence: Advances and Future Progress*. A social influence tactic is defined as “any noncoercive technique, device, procedure, or

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<sup>11</sup> Gilbert, Fiske, and Lindzey, *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers* (Greenwood Pub Group, 1975), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science*, 240.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony R. Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence: Advances and Future Progress*. 1st ed. (Psychology Press, 2007), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 4. Hovland conducted experimental research on the effects of source credibility, individual differences, and organization of the message on persuasion.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet found that voters were able to be swayed using mass media content.

manipulation capable of creating or changing the belief or behavior of a target of the influence attempt.”<sup>17</sup> Many of these tactics along with a cognitive COG analysis will be used to contribute to the SIA.

The term “center of gravity” was developed by Prussian military mastermind Carl von Clausewitz. A COG is described as a source of strength for any military or government involved in a conflict. He defines a COG as “the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends.”<sup>18</sup> The idea is that the COG must be the focal point of all actions against an adversary in order to make the greatest impact and increase the chance for victory. It is rare for an adversary to have only one COG, so it is necessary to be able to determine what the COGs are and how best to attack or exploit them.

Just as Clausewitz theorized that COGs should be used against adversaries in traditional warfare, Pratkanis suggests there are certain focal points that should also be used to develop an influence campaign. In *Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts*, he identifies nine COGs, which he says should be the focus of one’s social influence campaign during public diplomacy in international conflict. Although they should not be confused with Clausewitz’s wartime COGs, which are only used in this thesis as a reference,<sup>19</sup> there is a relationship between the two. They both help determine where military leaders should focus their attention. Clausewitz’s COGs addresses the physical, Pratkanis’s COGs address the cognitive. Pratkanis created his COGs using concepts of social influence. They are not just principles of social influence, rather focal points where one should bring all of their social influence effort to bear on the adversary.<sup>20</sup> They are: 1) Primacy of Strategic Attack 2) Morale Beneffectance 3) Trust 4) Agenda Setting 5) Attitudinal Selectivity 6) Self-Justification 7) Seeds of Hatred 8) Psychological

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<sup>17</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (bnpublishing.com, 2007, 595–596.

<sup>19</sup> Note: Clausewitz’s COGs apply to traditional warfare; Pratkanis’ apply to social influence campaigns.

<sup>20</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 123.

Reactance 9) The Fog of Propaganda.<sup>21</sup> These nine COGs can be used to determine which social influence tactics should be used, when they should be applied, and to which target they should be directed.

Influence is not just communicating policy to be heard, but, “changing public opinion, beliefs, behavior, expectations, perspectives, and the like in support of U.S. foreign policy.”<sup>22</sup> An important characteristic of influence is that it is not simply telling the target what you want them to hear or how you want them to act; if this were the case, every attempt at influence conducted by U.S. in Vietnam would have been a success. Instead, influence is a complex manipulation of perception that is used to set up a situation in a way that the target decides how they will act in accordance with how they perceive the situation.

Pratkanis divides influence tactics into categories using the four main tasks of a communicator according to classical rhetoric theory. They are: 1) landscaping or pre-persuasion, 2) source credibility, 3) effective message tactics, and, 4) emotional tactics.<sup>23</sup> These categories make it easier to identify the correct tactic for a specific situation or goal.

A landscaping tactic is one that “structures the situation in such a way that the target is likely to be receptive to a given course of action and respond in a desired manner.”<sup>24</sup> Source credibility tactics rely on relationships that must be established between the source and the target of influence.<sup>25</sup> Effective message tactics are those that organize, provide and induce the target to come up with their own arguments and reasons for a given course of action.<sup>26</sup> The final category, emotional tactics, achieves influence by exploiting the target’s feelings, affect, arousal, emotions and tensions states.<sup>27</sup> One of the first landscaping tactics examined in this thesis is *Set Expectations*.

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<sup>21</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 125.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>23</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 50.

Setting expectations is a landscaping tactic that can sculpt the setting by creating a reference point, by which options are judged, and by guiding interpretations and perceptions that create a picture of reality. Pratkanis conducted experiments in which subliminal self-help tapes were played to subjects that were supposed to improve memory or build self-esteem. Some of the tapes were purposely mislabeled, causing a subject who thought he or she was listening to a memory improvement tape to actually be listening to a self-esteem tape. Results showed perceived improvement by the subjects simply based on the labels on the tapes. The expectations of the subjects created a reality that did not exist.<sup>28</sup> Prior to most of the following tactics, a set of expectations must be perceived by the target. A belief or vision of the future, created by setting expectations, is what will guide follow on influence tactics.

Other popular landscaping tactics are *Control the Flow of Information*, *Innuendo*, and *Projection*. Controlling the flow of information is the selective presentation of information in order to affect decision making to ones advantage. This is an important aspect of any military operation; it especially pertains to counterinsurgency operations. When two sides are competing to win over the population, the one that best controls the flow of information will have the advantage. Controlling the flow of information can be accomplished by limiting channels through which the population receives information, propaganda, censorship, and selected leaks and plants of information. Controlling the flow of information is not new in any respect and has been studied and practiced for years. In 1934, experiments by Annis and Meier helped them conclude that the planting of biased political information in college newspapers affected the decisions of the targets.<sup>29</sup> Command chronologies from 1st Command Action Group (CAG) indicate that controlling the flow of information was a top priority of the CAP. Tactics included taking complete control of entire radio bands, so only the U.S. could broadcast,<sup>30</sup> erasing

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<sup>28</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>30</sup> "1st Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period 1 May 1969–31 May 1969," June 20, 1969.

Viet Cong (VC) slogans and other evidence of VC influence, and placing televisions and radios in strategic Vietnamese households in order to make pro-Government of Vietnam (GVN) more available.<sup>31</sup>

Innuendo is an insinuation of a fact concerning the reputation and character of a subject, normally in a hurtful or derogatory nature.<sup>32</sup> One effective way of employing this tactic is simply by asking questions that create doubt as to one's character. Wegner, Wenzlaff, Kerker, and Beattie conducted experiments on subjects during the time of national elections. The tests were run on a group of people who were presented with articles regarding political candidates. Headlines were in the form of questions, assertions, and denials pertaining to the character of different candidates. The study revealed that questioning yielded a level of distrust equal to assertions and higher than the denial headlines presented.<sup>33</sup>

A more specific form of innuendo is projection. Projection takes innuendo one step further. Instead of suggesting (through whichever way as mentioned above) derogatory information about a subject, projection accuses that subject of the negative traits possessed by the influence agent. By doing so, the influence agent hopes to deflect attention from one's own misdeeds. Rucker and Pratkanis showed through experiments that this tactic is extremely effective even after targets have tried to refute the claim.<sup>34</sup>

Additional landscaping tactics that are applicable to counterinsurgency operations and discussed in this thesis are: agenda setting, coalition formation, jigsawing, and fait accompli (creating a psychology of the inevitable).

The source credibility tactic, or a tactic that relies on a social relationship, discussed in this thesis is the altercast. There are many forms of altercasting that include the tact altercast, authority—agent altercast, expert—unknowing public, high status—admirer altercast, physically attractive—admirer altercast, and many others. The

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<sup>31</sup> "1st Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period 1 Nov 1968–30 Nov 1968," January 10, 1969.

<sup>32</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 27.

<sup>33</sup> D. M. Wegner, R. Wenzlaff, R. M. Kerker, and A. E. Beattie, "Incrimination Through Innuendo: Can media question become public answers?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40 (1981): 825.

<sup>34</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 27.

common theme among all of these altercasts is that they place targets in a specific social role with the goal of that target behaving socially in accordance with that role.<sup>35</sup> In his work *Altercasting as an Influence Tactic*, Pratkanis describes many of the tactics and identified three social pressures that are brought about when a person accepts a role through altercasting, they are:

1) Others in the social environment expect the altar to behave in a manner consistent with the role.

2) The role provides the altar with selective exposure to information consistent with the role.

3) The role is associated with a social identity that provides the altar with a stake in a given social system.<sup>36</sup>

The close living conditions and daily interactions with the population experienced by CAP Marines created an ideal environment for emotional tactics. Emotional tactics include fear appeals, norm of reciprocity, commitment traps, effort justification, empathy, and psychological reactance. In their thesis *Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations*, Scott Cone, William Rayfield, and Joseph Stach address all of these and provide recommendations for their use, reasons why they work, success factors, risks, and counter tactics.

Their thesis is the first of its kind, in that it takes several recognized social influence tactics and applies them to military operations. This thesis builds on their work and applies many of the COGs and tactics discussed above to a specific military program, the CAP.

## **B. COMBINED ACTION PROGRAM (CAP)**

The CAP was a pacification program used by the U.S. Marines in South Vietnam. Its strategy in Vietnam differed from that of the top commander, General Westmoreland,

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<sup>35</sup> Anthony R. Pratkanis, "Altercasting as an influence tactic." In *Attitudes, Behavior, and Social Context: The Role of Norms and Group Membership*, 201–226. (Psychology Press, 1999), 202.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 203–204.



which was attrition through a “search and destroy” strategy.<sup>37</sup> The CAP concept combines a squad of Marines and a platoon of South Vietnamese Popular Forces to assist villages in resisting VC influence. By living within the villages, CAP Marines were able to cut off the VC and NVA from their most important resource, the people. A more detailed discussion of the CAP is provided in Chapter IV. The following is a review of sources used for both the history/overview and for the SIA conducted in Chapters V and VI.

The official history of the Marine Corps, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam*, is a five volume series that contains detailed summaries of the yearly operations of the Marines in Vietnam. They were prepared by the Marine Corps History and Museums Division and cover year by year the Marine Corps involvement in the Vietnam War. The co-author of this series is Mr. Jack Shulimson, the senior civilian historian on the Vietnam project at the time.<sup>38</sup> The series only lightly discusses the CAP, but does provide the names of the CAP commands and high ranking officers, which makes for a great starting point for any military research.

*The Betrayal* is a critique of U.S. actions in Vietnam by one of the CAP commanders, Lt. Col. William R. Corson. Much of the book is focused on what was wrong with the war, especially the attitude of the top commanders and politicians about how the war should be approached. Two chapters are devoted to addressing the actions of the CAPs and provide detail and some insight how they were run and how the Vietnamese felt about U.S. troops living and operating inside their villages.<sup>39</sup> Corson wrote these books during the war so the years covered are limited (1965–1967); however, it provides an excellent foundation for understanding the CAP in the context of the overall U.S. mission in Vietnam.

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<sup>37</sup> Edward F. Murphy, *Semper Fi: Vietnam: From Da Nang to the DMZ: Marine Corps Campaigns, 1965–1972* (Presidio Press, 1997), 37.

<sup>38</sup> Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam*. Information was also collected from the 1966 and 1969 versions of the same series.

<sup>39</sup> William R. Corson, *The Betrayal*. (W. W. Norton, 1968).

The next major source used for researching the CAP was “*The Combined Action Program: An Alternative Not Taken*,” a master’s honors thesis by Robert Klyman at the University of Michigan. It is a broad overview of the CAP that attempts to answer the questions: “1) What exactly was the CAP, and how did it develop from 1965–1971? 2) What did the commanders of the Marines and the CAP think of the program? 3) Did they think it was a success?”<sup>40</sup> The strength of this thesis lies in its bibliography. Klyman conducted in-depth research of the chronologies, oral histories, and other records kept at the Marine Corps Historical Center in Washington, D.C., and those sources were valuable to research for this thesis.

Although Klyman’s research does not cover any civic action or community development projects that could provide some insight into particular social influence tactics, Michael Peterson’s “*The Combined Action Platoons: The U.S. Marines’ Other War in Vietnam*” does. This book provides an historical overview of the CAP and an analysis of civic action and community development projects conducted. It provides details of projects conducted inside the villages, figures on handouts,<sup>41</sup> and most importantly, the local perception of these projects.<sup>42</sup> Albert Hemingway’s *Our War Was Different* is another book that focuses solely on the CAP. It is an “intimate look at life in the villages, as experienced by CAP members from different platoons throughout the I Corps section of Vietnam.”<sup>43</sup> Both Peterson’s and Hemingway’s works were a key to collecting the data for the SIA.

*The Village* provides one of the only long-term accounts of any of the CAPs. It is a firsthand account of a platoon in the Chu Lai area from 1967–1971.<sup>44</sup> Its focus is on

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Klyman, “The Combined Action Program: An Alternative Not Taken” (master’s thesis., University of Michigan, 1986), 5.

<sup>41</sup> Michael E. Peterson, *The combined action platoons: the U.S. Marines’ other war in Vietnam* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1989), 24.

<sup>42</sup> Peterson, *The combined action platoons*, 104–114.

<sup>43</sup> Albert Hemingway, *Our War Was Different: Marine Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam* (Naval Institute Press, 1994), xiii.

<sup>44</sup> F. J. West, *The Village: The True Story of 17 Months in the Life of Vietnamese Village, Where a Handful of American Volunteers and Vietnamese Militia Lived and Died Together Trying to Defend It*, 1st ed. (Harper & Row, 1972).

one platoon inside the hamlet Binh Nghia, so there is not much mention of the program as a whole, rather a day-to-day account of the lives of the Marines who lived in the village.

Other sources of information used for data collection on the CAP were articles from the Marine Corps Gazette, command chronologies, and recorded interviews of CAP Marines obtained from the Marine Corps Archives in Quantico, Virginia. These sources proved to be the most useful in getting a direct from the source critique of the program. The command chronologies list facts, figures, and daily events of each of the CAPs under their command. The interviews come straight from the source with Marines who were serving or had just served in a combined action platoon. The questions range from “what was your mission” to “what did you personally think of the villagers” to “what types of problems did you have with the PFs assigned to you.” No literature or written articles provide as much detail about the CAP

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

This thesis presents opinions and factual information derived from multiple sources. The goal of the research was to gather enough information on the CAP in Vietnam so that it could be analyzed with specific tactics pulled from the science of social influence, then determine under which conditions the tactics worked, when they did not work, and why. Understanding when and how to apply the right social influence tactics to specific military operations (e.g., counterinsurgency) will aid military planners when creating an influence plan. In depth research was conducted on the two topics and then analysis was performed attempting to tie the two together.

First, the CAP is outlined and the history and development of the its use in South Vietnam is described. It is important to examine the history of the program in order to fully understand the purpose and mission behind its use and implementation before it can be analyzed through the lens of the science of social influence. This is done through extensive surveying of primary sources like FMFPAC command chronologies and taped interviews, as well as secondary sources like those mentioned above in the literature review.

The command chronologies for I CAG and 2d CAG were used to build a chronological narrative of the program's development. Details on numbers of troops, amounts of handouts, specific community projects, and daily events were all obtained from these reports. Using the knowledge of social influence obtained from research, the chronologies were reviewed looking for indicators of social influence in action. Particular attention was paid to the numbers of villages pacified, PSYOP/propaganda summaries, and summaries of daily interaction with the villagers.

The taped interviews come from veterans from the CAP, and include the views of both officers and enlisted Marines. Additionally, the interview subjects spanned all levels of military analysis from small unit leadership at the tactical level to operational and strategic leadership at the battalion level. Each interview was listened to with the intent

of determining what, if any, social influence tactics the Marines were using. The same type of indicators mentioned in the command chronology section above, were pulled out from the recordings for analysis.

The second area of research focused on the Science of Social Influence. This thesis uses specific COGs and influence tactics along with the CAP data to conduct an SIA of the CAP. The following guidelines for conducting a formal SIA were used:

- a) the social influence, power, and deceptive tactics typically used in a given domain;

- b) the centers of gravity or the factors that will determine the success or failure of influence in a domain;

- c) how influence is exchanged within a community (social institutions and influence landscape).<sup>45</sup>

The specific COGs and influence tactics used for evaluation have been extensively researched, and were recommended as analysis factors by Pratkanis.

A COG, which is a focal point for conducting a social influence campaign, is made up of corollaries that break it down into smaller subsets of requirements. The corollaries are dependent on specific social influence tactics, which are also further analyzed. Each applicable COG and its associated corollaries, and tactics, is used to examine the data acquired from the research conducted on the CAP. Specific examples of the CAPs using the techniques described by the COGs are provided in each section. This information was then put into a reference table (Table 1), that identifies which specific tactics should be considered during specific conditions that may be encountered during COIN operations.

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<sup>45</sup> Pratkanis, "Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis," 119.

## IV. THE COMBINED ACTION PROGRAM

### A. INTRODUCTION

Since 1954, Vietnam had been divided along the 17th parallel with a communist government in the North and anti communists in the South. The U.S. had a presence in South Vietnam since around 1950 providing advisory assistance in an effort to prevent a communism from taking over the entire country. In early January 1965, hostilities and political unrest were building in South Vietnam. Up to that point there were few U.S. combat troops in Vietnam. The U.S. presence consisted mostly of technicians, advisors, pilots, supply and administrative personnel.<sup>46</sup> In February, the commander of Military Assistance Command (MACV), General William C. Westmoreland, determined that two Marine battalions were needed for security of one of South Vietnam's most important airbases in Da Nang.<sup>47</sup> On March 8, 1965, the Marines arrived on the beaches of Da Nang welcomed by university students and girls holding leis of flowers, a gesture set up by the mayor of Da Nang.<sup>48</sup> By the end of 1965, 38,000 additional Marines were deployed to South Vietnam as the III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF). They were commanded by Major General Lewis W. Walt, who fell under the command of MACV, General Westmoreland.<sup>49</sup>

Westmoreland, an Army General, believed in a strategy of attrition. He favored "big battalion" approach to fighting the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Viet Cong (VC).<sup>50</sup> "Search and destroy" would become his fighting call to both his troops and top politicians. During search and destroy, he stated, that the villagers had three choices:

- 1) Stay close to his land (risk living in a free fire zone)

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<sup>46</sup> Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam*, xi.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>50</sup> David A. Clement, "LE MY Study In Counterinsurgency," *Marine Corps Gazette*, July 1967, 22.

2) Join VC (become a target in a free fire zone)

3) Move to an area under the South Vietnamese Government (GVN) control (become a refugee)<sup>51</sup>.

The Marines had a different view of what it would take to win the war. The *Small Wars Manual* published in 1940 contains the statement: “In small wars, tolerance, sympathy, and kindness should be the keynote of our relationship with the mass of the population....The purpose should always be to restore normal government....and to establish peace, order, and security....”<sup>52</sup> General Walt believed in pacification and was a supporter of tactics described in the *Small Wars Manual*.<sup>53</sup>

In early May 1965, two companies of Marines, along with a platoon of Vietnamese Popular Forces (PFs), drove off guerrilla forces in the village of Le My, eight miles south of Da Nang. The Marines stayed, built a defensive perimeter, and for the first time in years the village was not under the influence of the VC. In Le My, the Marine’s strategy emphasized self-help projects that helped build a school, dispensary, marketplace, and two bridges. Later that month, Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPAC) commander Lieutenant General (LTGen) Victor H. Krulak and Lieutenant Colonel (LTCol) David A. Clement met with the chiefs of Le My. During that meeting, the village chiefs had one question, “Are you going to stay?”<sup>54</sup> That one question prompted LTGen Krulak to further implement pacification tactics with the goal of winning the support of the South Vietnam population. He stated to Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC),

It is our conviction that if we can destroy the guerrilla fabric among the people, we will automatically deny the larger units the food and the

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<sup>51</sup> Raymond C. Damm, “The combined action program: A tool for the future,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1998, 2.

<sup>52</sup> “U.S. Marine Corps Small Wars Manual.” Washington: GPO, 1940, I-32.

<sup>53</sup> Lewis W. Walt, *Strange War, Strange Strategy: A General's Report on Vietnam* (Funk & Wagnalls Co, 1970), 29.

<sup>54</sup> Clement, “LE MY Study In Counterinsurgency,” 3.

intelligence and the taxes and the other support they need. The real war is among the people and not among the mountains.<sup>55</sup>

## **B. THE CAP CONCEPT**

One of the most successful of the pacification programs implemented in Vietnam was the CAP. The CAP concept combined a squad of Marines and a platoon of South Vietnamese Popular Forces (PFs) to assist villages in resisting VC influence. Figure 1 depicts the organization of these platoons. It shows that the Marines and the PFs were completely integrated within the unit. This means that Marine fire-team leaders would be platoon squad leaders and Marine riflemen would be platoon fire-team leaders. The Marines trained the PFs to become a viable fighting force and contributed any necessary air and artillery support during battles. The PFs provided local knowledge (e.g., terrain, customs) and intelligence. By combining forces and living inside the villages, the Marines believed they could win the “hearts and minds” of the villagers and gain intelligence on the movement of VC in return for security (see Figure 2 for a Combined Action Platoon (CAPs) Mission). In the summer of 1965, the CAP took hold and four CAPs were formed into a Combined Action Company (CAC).

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<sup>55</sup> Edward Doyle, Samuel Lipsman, *America Takes Over the Vietnam Experience* (Time Life UK, 1985), 61–65.



## COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION OF A COMBINED ACTION PLATOON

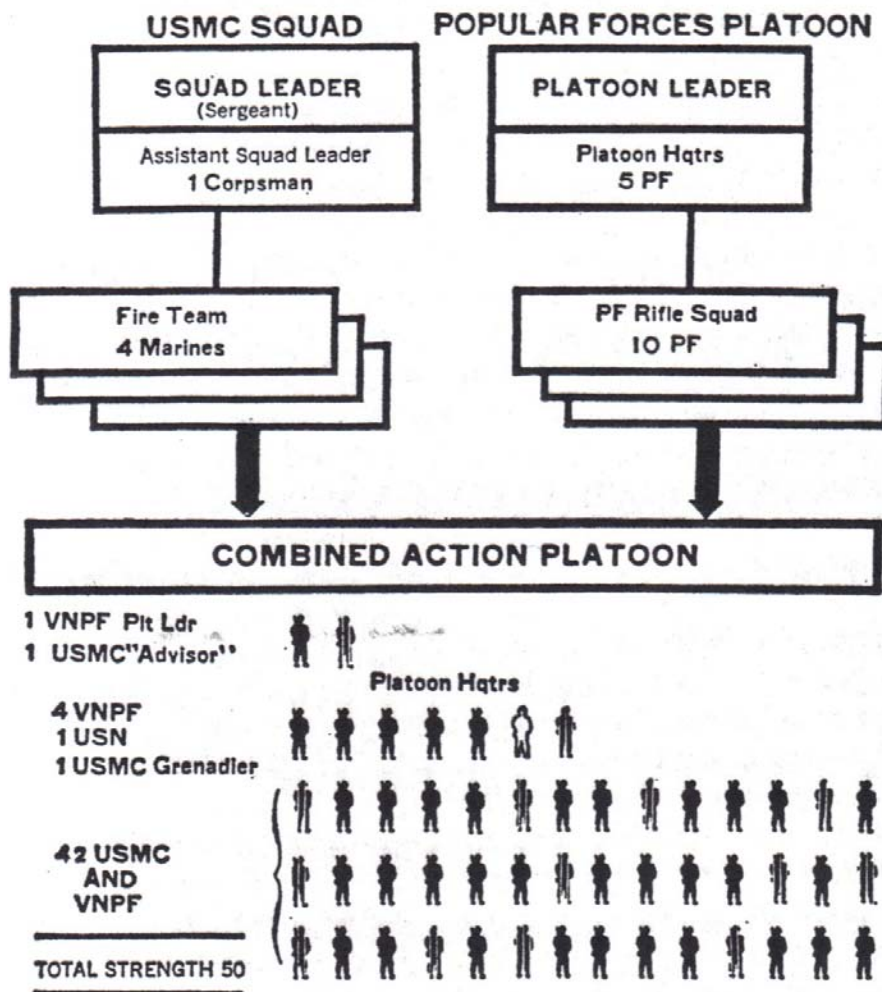


Figure 1. Organization of a Combined Action Platoon (From Corson, 1968)<sup>56</sup>

The CAP concept was not new to the Marines; in fact very similar strategies were used during the Banana Wars (Haiti 1915–1934, Nicaragua 1926–1933, and Santo Domingo 1916–1923). During those wars, U.S. Marines organized, trained, and directed local forces, which became the national police force or Polica Nacional. After intense training with the Marines, the Polica Nacional would go out on anti-guerrilla patrols while the Marines stayed in the villages and conducted security. This tactic proved

<sup>56</sup> Corson, *The Betrayal*, 182.

successful, frustrating Rebel Leader Augusto Cesar Sandino to the point that he put bounties on some of the Marines—dead or alive.<sup>57</sup> The same would be true for many of the CAP Marines in Vietnam.

(3) Combined Action Platoons (CAPs).

(a) Mission.

(1) Provide security within the platoon area of responsibility, called a CAP tactical area of coordination (TAOC), to include but not limited to the following tasks.

(a) Destroy the Viet Cong infrastructure.

(b) Protect the friendly political/social structure.

(c) Conduct patrols and ambushes in their assigned areas to protect bases and lines of communications.

(d) Conduct vigorous Civic Action and PsyOps programs to obtain the trust and confidence of the local populace and to benefit from any military intelligence which may result.

(e) Participate in combined operations with the ARVN and/or other FWMAF within assigned areas as requested.

(2) Support the Revolutionary Development (RD) Program. The success of the RD activities make this program a prize target for the Viet Cong. The RD Teams are an excellent source of local intelligence. CAPs having RD Teams in their operating areas provide support by:

(a) Providing security for RD Teams by means of the tasks listed in paragraph (3) (a) (1) above.

(b) When requested, they supplement the security elements of the RD Team to permit their more effective use in purely RD tasks.

(c) Providing material and/or technical assistance as available and as requested.

Figure 2. 2d Combined Action Group Mission for Combined Action Platoons (From 2d CAG Chronology)<sup>58</sup>

## C. GROWTH AND SUCCESS

After the initial establishment of the CAP, the program quickly expanded. By the end of 1966, there were 57 CAPs consisting of 729 enlisted Marines and 1482 Vietnamese PFs. In 1970, at its peak size and strength there were 42 Marine officers,

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<sup>57</sup> Hemingway, *Our War Was Different*, 3.

<sup>58</sup> "2d Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period of 1 Oct 1968–30 Nov 1968," January 9, 1968, 14.

2050 enlisted Marines, two naval officers, 126 Navy corpsmen and nearly 3000 PFs operating 114 CAPs.<sup>59</sup> 2d CAG in Quang Nam Province was the largest and 4th CAG in Quang Tri Province was the smallest.

One of the few quantitative indicators of success (measure of effectiveness (MOE)) was the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES). The HES was created in 1966 under the direction of the Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara. The HES tracked and analyzed information on all aspects of pacification. The information used for evaluation was provided by province and district advisors and included security, political, and socio-economic information. It assigned hamlets a letter grade A-E or V. A meaning the hamlet has adequate security forces, B—a VC threat exists, C—Hamlet is subject to infrequent VC harassment, D—VC activity including taxation and terrorism exist, E—The VC are effective, V—Hamlet under VC control.<sup>60</sup> Hamlets rated A, B, or C were considered pacified for the time, and those with a D, E, or V were given the most attention. Most CAPs noted an improvement in the HES when it was used for evaluation. “For example, 24 of the 39 villages with CACs in place, including nine that had been initiated within three months of the study, saw an improvement in their HES score.”<sup>61</sup>

The problem with the HES, as many CAP leaders have noted, is that it could not capture the essence of pacification. That is, whether or not a villager felt safe at home. “One Marine general noted, “there are various indices by which a hamlet is judged ‘secured’ or ‘pacified’: one of the most pragmatic and useful is whether or not the chief sleeps in his hamlet at night.”<sup>62</sup>

Other quantitative indicators of success include patrols, kill ratios,<sup>63</sup> numbers of deserters,<sup>64</sup> and construction projects.<sup>65</sup> Patrols were a solid indicator of the success of

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<sup>59</sup> Hemingway, *Our War Was Different.*, 5.

<sup>60</sup> Charles R. Smith, *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown: 1969* (History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1988), 280.

<sup>61</sup> Klyman, “The Combined Action Program: An Alternative Not Taken,” 18.

<sup>62</sup> Jack Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War 1966* (History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1982), 258.

<sup>63</sup> Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam 1966*, 240. FMFPAC study for period AUG-DEC 1966, indicates kill ratio of CAPs was 14 VC to 1 Marine of PF compared to 3 to 1 for regular PF units.

the CAP. In 1970, the CAPs were conducting almost 1000 patrols each month, with the majority of them at night because that was the time when the VC was most active. In the first half of 1970 the CAPs killed nearly 500 VC forces and captured over 80 prisoners while only losing 22 men of their own.<sup>66</sup> These numbers (especially those of Marine casualties) were much lower than those of the units conducting “search and destroy” missions.

The most noteworthy success of the CAP can be found in qualitative data such as what the CAP leaders, villagers, and the VC thought of the program. These data will serve the purpose of this thesis because influence (in an influence campaign) is based largely on what is believed, or perceived, by those involved.

In his debrief on May 2, 1969, COL George Knapp, after serving as Chief of Plans and Policy Branch of I CORP Joint Staff, stated:

I believe the CAP program is one of our greatest contributors that we have in I CORPS as does the civilians out there also, and I might add that the Army officers in I Corps that come in contact with it are completely sold on it and I cannot understand why the Army and other Corps areas will not adopt a similar program.<sup>67</sup>

For the most part, CAP Marines were just as enthusiastic. “I feel that this type of program is going to win this conflict in Vietnam. Maybe not now or in the next five years or even the next ten years. But the children who we are helping now are going to remember who helped them.”<sup>68</sup> The belief in the program can be seen in the fact that some put their personal time and money into the effort. “I provided my own money to one of the kids in the village who sold popsicles everyday instead of going to school. So I gave him money to buy clothes and go to school. So that he might learn something and

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<sup>64</sup> Shulimson, U.S. Marines in Vietnam 1966, 240. FMFPAC study for period AUG-DEC 1966, indicates kill ratio of CAPs was 14 VC to 1 Marine of PF compared to 3 to 1 for regular PF units. FMFPAC study for period AUG-DEC 1966, indicates 39,000 PFs deserted, none of which were member of CAPs.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 249. FMCPAC reports CAPs in 1966 completed 1,100 construction projects.

<sup>66</sup> Murphy, *Semper Fi*, 297.

<sup>67</sup> COL George Knapp. No. 4088-A, Oral History Collection, History and Museum Collection, HQMC.

<sup>68</sup> Staff SGT Gary L. Smith, No. 815, Oral History Collection, History and Museum Collection, HQMC.

not grow up to be a VC. After that I also sent another girl to school.”<sup>69</sup> The fact that the Marines directly involved in the program believed in it provides evidence that there was enough buy-in (amongst its practitioners), and dedication devoted to the effort to achieve success.

The villager’s belief in the CAP can be found through various reports as well. One of their greatest contributions and proof of an ability to succeed is the fact that once the villagers trusted the Marines they began to provide significant intelligence as to the whereabouts and activities of the VC, and interact with them socially. FMFPAC reports state:

“CAPs in Quang Nam Province continue to be the best source of accurate, timely information because of their extremely close relationship in working and living with the people.”<sup>70</sup>

Then, seven months later:

“The close contact of the CAPs with the village population continues to be the nerve center of the intelligence chain.”<sup>71</sup>

Marines were often invited to social functions by the villagers. Normally reserved for only the closest of family and friends; CAP Marines oftentimes found themselves taking part in banquets, weddings, and funerals.

Another indication of success or the perceived ability of success comes from the actions of the VC in regards to the CAP. Many CAP Marines had a price put on their heads by the VC. One of them, SGT Calvin Brown, was known by the Vietnamese for his personal response, civic action, and his strategy for hamlet pacification. Another

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<sup>69</sup> CPL Joseph A. Trainor, No. 2202-2341-3c, Oral History Collection, History and Museum Collection, HQMC.

<sup>70</sup> “2d Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period of 1 OCT 1968 - 30 NOV 1968,” 10.

<sup>71</sup> “2d Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period 1 May 1969–31 May 1969.”

Marine, SGT Melvin Murrell, had a bounty put on him by the VC of 750,000 Piasters, dead or alive.<sup>72</sup> For the VC to place bounties on U.S. Marines, they must have felt threatened by the CAP.

To fully understand what the CAP was doing to accomplish the above successes, an exploration of how cognitive COGs and individual influence tactics play into a social influence campaign is required. The remaining chapters look at the successes of the CAP through the lens of the science of social influence.

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<sup>72</sup> Peterson, *The combined action platoons*, 113.

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## **V. CENTERS OF GRAVITY ANALYSIS**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will use several of the COGs developed by Anthony Pratkanis for campaigns in international conflict to analyze tactics used by both the CAP and the Viet Cong (VC) in South Vietnam.<sup>73</sup> Each applicable COG and its associated corollaries will be applied to operations conducted by the CAP in an attempt to provide military leaders today with a baseline in which to focus their efforts when conducting an influence campaign in COIN operations.

#### **1. COG 1: Primacy of Strategic Attack**

Social influence campaigns should be thought of in terms of a strategy of goals, targets, and means and operations. Goals are those actions, beliefs, and attitudes that are to be affected. The targets are those whom the campaign will be focused on. The means and operations are the social influence tactics that will be used.<sup>74</sup> The key to victory is attacking your opponent's strategy while at the same time protecting your own.

During the Vietnam War, both the CAP and VC conducted social influence campaigns using the above mentioned strategy. The VC's stated mission was the reunification of Vietnam, to be accomplished by the overthrow of the U.S. backed government in South Vietnam. Its strategy was to convince the population that they could liberate Vietnam from the colonial imperialism first represented by the French then the Americans. The message was that if the imperialists were removed, Vietnam could once again be ruled by the Vietnamese.<sup>75</sup> The U.S. strategy was to protect South Vietnam from communism, and at the same time stop the fall of another government to the communists. The goals of each were conflicting, the means and operations different, but the target was the same—the South Vietnamese population.

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<sup>73</sup> Pratkanis, "Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis," 123. For this thesis, the acronym COG (military acronym) will be used in place of CG (Pratkanis acronym).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*. 1st ed. (The M.I.T. Press, 1966), 344–345.



A tactic used by the VC was to hide in the villages during the day, and conduct ambushes against U.S. and GVN troops at night. As long as the villages were under their control (or influence), they always had a place to eat, sleep, resupply, and most importantly spread their propaganda and recruit.<sup>76</sup>

*a. Strategic Traps*

“An effective influence campaign is one that traps and constrains enemy action and weakens and divides support for the adversary; conversely, an ineffective influence campaign is one that can serve as a trap for one’s own cause.”<sup>77</sup>

The VC held an advantage in that the only strategic traps that would affect them would have to be self inflicted. It needed to ensure that the Vietnamese were ruling the country, and that they(VC) did not do anything to strengthen the fear of communism. The trap to avoid for the U.S. was being seen as another imperialist in control of Vietnam through an appointed and therefore, puppet government.

For the U.S. to be successful it was necessary to counter the “imperialist liberator” theme by creating a nasty image of the VC and communism. Because of its mission, the CAP was an effective tool to accomplish this. The initial CAP mission statement included: destroying VC infrastructure, protect assigned villages and friendly infrastructure, and participate in civic action and conduct Psychological Operations (PSYOP) as part of a local effort toward “Nation Building.”<sup>78</sup> The CAP was effective in keeping the VC from promoting their strategy in the villages they occupied because they were set up in a way that denied the VC refuge (living in the villages and providing twenty-four hour security).

A component of the CAP strategy that contributed to dividing support for the VC was empowering the people. Building new buildings, schools, and wells was a popular tactic conducted by U.S. troops throughout the South Vietnam countryside. The

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<sup>76</sup> Damm, “The combined action program: A tool for the future,” 1.

<sup>77</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 125.

<sup>78</sup> “1st Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period 1 November 1968–30 November 1968.”

problem was that as soon as VC heard that a new structure had been put up, they would destroy it. Before the CAP, the villagers were not affected by the VC destroying these new structures, since they had nothing invested in them. In their minds, they were simply the projects of foreign entities trying to gain influence in the region. The CAP Marines changed this with their approach of providing the villagers with the materials, giving direction and having the people build them. Naturally, the villagers would feel a sense of pride and ownership and would then turn on the VC if they came in and destroyed the structures.<sup>79</sup> The burning and destroying of structures that the villagers had a stake in by the VC was actually helping the CAP with a strategic trap. Empowering the Vietnamese enabled the CAPs to directly attack the VC's propaganda strategy of "America as the colonial imperialist," by demonstrating that the U.S. was about promoting self-determination and local rule.

## **2. COG 2: Morale Benefectance**

"The battlefield in a social influence campaign is the morale of combatants, civilians of belligerents, neutrals and third parties who may become engaged in the conflict."<sup>80</sup>

Morale is the desire and willingness to start and then continue a cause or action. It is a function of the perceived legitimacy and goodness of the cause or action (beneficence or doing good) and the expectations of success.<sup>81</sup> Morale benefectance plays a huge role in COIN operations because during an insurgency, a goal of both the insurgents and counter insurgents is to persuade the general population that they are going to win, or, the victory of "our" side is inevitable. When conducting COIN, this real or perceived expectation of success can be even more important than the "doing good" aspect of morale. In most cases, the general population will support whichever group they believe is going to win. This is because if, for example, a village does not support an insurgent group (with intelligence, food, shelter, etc.) and then that group is

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<sup>79</sup> COL George Knapp, No. 4088-A, Oral History Collection, History and Museum Collection, HQMC.

<sup>80</sup> Pratkanis, "Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis," 126.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

successful, there is a justifiable fear of retribution. This is the reason why it is so important to ensure the morale of the targets of an influence campaign is lifted and that of the enemy reduced.

In Vietnam, the VC was constantly telling the villagers that “we are going to win.” The only way for the CAPs to counter the VC and convince the villagers that they (U.S./GVN) were going to win, was through action. This is where the “fait accompli” or psychology of the inevitable tactic is useful. The “fait accompli” tactic is a process in which the target is convinced that a certain course of action is inevitable and there is nothing they can do about it. It induces people to reconcile themselves to their fate, accept it, and even like it.<sup>82</sup> An important aspect of this tactic is to convince the target that “we are not just going to win now, but also in the long run,” the target must believe that the assisting forces are not going to get up and go once things get rough.

In many instances, the CAP Marines were able to convince the villagers that they were going to defeat the VC, and it therefore created a belief for the cause. According to SGT Moore, a CAP Commander (1-3-4, Lima Company, Quang Ni Province), once regular daytime patrols of the rice paddies and nighttime ambushes of the VC (who were coming in to take the rice and seek shelter) commenced, the people believed in the CAPs and rewarded them with information on the VC.<sup>83</sup> The ability for the villagers to harvest their rice in the daytime and keep it for themselves without harassment from the VC is an example of morale benefectance in action. The trust formed did not occur overnight, it took many months to cultivate. Conducting both daytime and nighttime patrols on a regular basis, even after suffering casualties, demonstrated to the villagers that the CAPs felt that they could do what they wanted, and when they wanted to.

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<sup>82</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 30.

<sup>83</sup> SGT James Moore, No. 3679-A-3, Oral History Collection, History and Museum Collection, HQMC.

*a. Expectations*

“The perceived success or failure of an action is determined, in part, by whether or not it succeeded or failed to meet expectations.”<sup>84</sup>

An expectation is a belief about the future. When two sides are creating expectations about the future, one must gain an advantage (“fait accompli” or psychology of the inevitable) in order to persuade the people that their side of the situation is the most appealing. The influence agent should guide the targets interpretations and perceptions to create a picture of reality by setting expectations.<sup>85</sup>

In order to win the “hearts and minds” of the people, the CAP had to first create believable expectations for them to hold on to. The goal was to get the people to believe that the GVN was going to win, would best serve their personal interests, provide security, and that they no longer had to fear VC retribution.<sup>86</sup> The issue was how.

Traditionally, the Vietnamese villager’s most important social institution is the household, followed by the village. The household and the village is where their personal interest lied. Villages were in the form of a cooperative or protective association, which meant that farmers would keep some of their crops for their families, sell some, and turn over a portion of their crop to the village committees, which would store and redistribute the rice. The VC knew this and took advantage of them by taxing individuals on their harvests, and taking the villagers crops to feed both themselves and the NVA.<sup>87</sup> In order to set the expectation that the U.S./GVN were going to be victorious and the villagers could return to their ways of providing for themselves and contributing only to their families and their village, a PSYOP campaign was conducted. It focused on convincing the ordinary rice farmer that he would benefit personally by GVN victory (see Figure 3 for an example).<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 127.

<sup>85</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 23.

<sup>86</sup> Robert W. Chandler, *War of ideas: The U.S. propaganda campaign in Vietnam* (Westview Press, 1981), 155–156.

<sup>87</sup> Pike, *Viet Cong*, 6–7.

<sup>88</sup> Chandler, *War of ideas*, 167.



### 3. COG 3: Trust

“Without trust and credibility a social influence campaign is impossible.”<sup>91</sup>

Influence operations depend on trust and credibility because without them it would be impossible to guide a target audience in a desired direction. One way to create trust and credibility is through the social influence tactic of altercasting. There are many forms of altercasting, but essentially it is a tactic that places targets in a specific social role with the goal of that target behaving socially in accordance with that role.<sup>92</sup>

Some pacification programs backfired on the U.S. because of the roles that they placed the villagers in. The resettlement programs,<sup>93</sup> for example, moved villagers into government controlled areas where they were provided with security in return for working the farms (not their own lands) in a co-operative fashion. The problem with resettlement is that it historically creates resentment towards those who take people away from their homes. To the GVN, these programs were a way of population control in an effort to keep them away from the VC and their propaganda machine. To the villagers, they were a continuation of the pacification effort and colonial oppression that had been attempted in their country since the 1950s. To the VC and NLF, they were concentration camps,<sup>94</sup> which created an opportunity for exploiting them as such.

The CAP, on the other hand, did not place the villagers in a foreign role. Instead the villagers stayed in their homes, farmed their own land, and lived amongst their neighbors and families. The CAP put them in the role of co-workers with the Marines and PFs, which differs greatly from being put in the role of worker of (or employee of, slave of) the U.S./GVN, which the resettlement programs did. The CAP concept created an environment where trust between the villagers and the government came easier than in environments created by other pacification programs.

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<sup>91</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 128.

<sup>92</sup> Anthony R. Pratkanis, “Altercasting as an influence tactic,” 202.

<sup>93</sup> Examples of resettlement programs are: the prosperity zone, the agrovillage, and the strategic hamlet.

<sup>94</sup> Pike, *Viet Cong*, 64.

**a.        *Listen***

“A trust relationship begins by listening to one’s audience.”<sup>95</sup>

Listening makes it possible to both understand the thoughts, beliefs, desires, and concerns of the target and opens doors for continued communication.<sup>96</sup> By simply listening to the villagers, CAP Marines were able to set up an atmosphere of trust where the villagers were encouraged to share their needs, fears, and opinions with them. The CAP concept really allowed this to happen, and happen fast because the CAPs were right there inside the villages where they were able to listen and respond to the villagers, sometimes immediately.

An example of this tactic being implemented successfully comes from the village of Binh Nghia, a few miles north of My Lai. There, the CAP assigned a district census grievance chief who would personally walk about the hamlets and ask villagers about their grievances against the Viet Cong and the government.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, CAP Marines frequently held public meetings with the villagers where, in an open forum atmosphere; the villagers were able to voice their opinion. Social influence theory suggests that by listening to the target, that target (due to the norm of reciprocity)<sup>98</sup> should then feel obligated to listen to the influence agent (CAP Marine).<sup>99</sup>

**b.        *The Significance of Deeds***

“Actions must in line with words.”<sup>100</sup>

Trust and credibility depend on the idea that “seeing is believing.” When attempting to influence a target, it is not enough to tell them what you are going to do or how you are going to help them, it must be proved to them through actions.

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<sup>95</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 129.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> West, *The Village*, 248.

<sup>98</sup> Note: The norm of reciprocity is based on “If I do something for you, then you should do something for me in return.” Also covered in Chapter II of this thesis.

<sup>99</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 129.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

An example of actions backing words is described in this brief summary from a chapter in West's *The Village*. Ambushes from the VC were abundant in March 1967. Ten Marines and five PFs had been killed recently, and intelligence indicated that a huge patrol of VC (120 or so) were going to strike again. Villagers left the village in fear of VC retribution. The Marines and the PFs stayed behind and waited for the next ambush that was expected. When it came, the Marines withstood the VC attack, and when the VC retreated, they ambushed them from the flanks inflicting numerous casualties. The next day when the news spread, the villagers returned, surprised and exalted to see the Marines and PFs holding down the fort.<sup>101</sup> "It was not for nothing. In a sense, it was the most important battle the Americans at Fort Page ever prepared to fight. They had chosen to stay; the PFs knew it, and soon so would the entire village."<sup>102</sup> This act convinced both the villagers and the PFs that the Marines were going to stay, and they were not scared of the enemy.

If the CAP Marines moved into a village and told the villagers that they were going to provide security, and then did not, or worse yet, left, legitimacy would be lost. From that point on, little, if anything they say would be believed. The CAP Marines, unlike many other pacification programs, stayed in the villages, secured them and therefore gained the trust of the villagers. Moving into the villages was an attempt to prove to the villagers that the CAPs were not just a temporary fix (also addresses long term goal issue of COG 2).

By March 1968, of the one hundred and eleven active CAPs, eighty-nine percent were not located within government compounds (like most Army and Marine Corps platoons); rather they lived directly in the villages. By setting up permanent (or more stable) residences inside the villages, COL Danowitz, a CAP leader, states they accomplished three things:

"1. Identified the platoon directly with the people, the people know that they are there to help and assist them 24 hours a day.

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<sup>101</sup> West, *The Village*, 189–194.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 195.



2. Assisted in the security of the platoon. Daylight harbor site for the men, during the first hours of darkness the patrol and conduct ambushes.

3. Created influence and effect between the PFs/Marines/villagers. Shared meals with families. Created a commonality, resentment discontinued. Increased cooperation and mutual association.”<sup>103</sup>

***c. Propaganda and Trust***

“Emotional propaganda can produce short-term results but damage long-term trust.”<sup>104</sup>

Social influence that plays on the target’s emotions, whether or not it is based on facts, can be an effective way of influencing behavior. However, when used over long periods of time, the chances are greater that the target will discover the manipulation and negatively affect the influence campaign,<sup>105</sup> especially if it is based on deception.

The CAP concept runs the same risk as any military group does when using deception, if it is discovered, credibility could come into question. However, platoons in the CAP concept have the advantage of working directly with their targets (the Vietnamese). By working with the village leaders the risk is minimized, because they can share the blame. A villager may question the credibility of a campaign run solely by outsiders, but the village leader is one of them (villager) and the CAP Marine lives with them so the risk is lessened.

**4. COG 4: Agenda Setting**

“Control of the topics of discussion impacts public opinion.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> COL Edward F. Danowitz, No. 4085, Oral History Collection, History and Museum Collection, HQMC,” April 28, 1969. COL Danowitz was the ASST. Chief of Staff, Combined Action Program, conducted by III MAF from 1 OCT 1968 to 6 APR 1969.

<sup>104</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 130.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

An agenda or a list of topics that are the focus of discussion must appear important and serve to define the criteria used in future discussions. Studies have been conducted that show agenda setting can be done through various ways including the media. In the case of the media, the issues that were given the most airtime were the issues the focus groups involved with the studies found to be the most important.<sup>107</sup> Another way setting the agenda can be accomplished is by persistently repeating the message or theme intended for the target.

Controlling the flow of information is a way is to ensure your agenda gets the most airtime or visibility. In international conflicts, dropping leaflets is a common form of setting the agenda through the control of information. It can be a very productive tactic in rural areas, or those areas where the population does not receive daily news through the media.

Command chronologies from multiple CAP commands show that leaders of the program understood the importance of ensuring persistent and repeated themes reached the target. Take into consideration the following excerpts from 2d CAG:

**f. Psychological operations activities employed by the Group during the month included the use of air dropped leaflets and hand dissemination of leaflets and Vietnamese newspapers.**

**(1) Approximately 28,000 CAPS ARE HERE TO HELP YOU leaflets were air dropped.**

**(2) Approximately 34,000 SAFE CONDUCT PASS leaflets were air dropped.**

Figure 4. PSYOP Activities May 1969 (From 2d CAG Chronology)<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Pratkanis, "Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis," 130.

<sup>108</sup> "2d Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period 1 May 1969–31 May 1969," 2–6.

h. Psychological operations activities employed by the group during the month of July included the use of hand distributed and air dropped leaflets:

- (1) Approximately 30,000 "CAPs are here to help you" leaflets were airdropped.
- (2) Approximately 50,000 "safe conduct passes" were air dropped.
- (3) 60,000 reward leaflets were air dropped during the month of July.
- (4) Approximately 50,000 Vietnamese newspapers were hand distributed.

Figure 5. PSYOP Activities July 1970 (From 2d CAG Chronology)<sup>109</sup>

These two excerpts come from the same command's monthly reports, fourteen months apart. This command was distributing the "CAPs are here to help you," the "safe conduct passes," and many other themes in bulk every month they were activated. The volume of leaflets ensured that most, if not all, villagers were exposed to them as well as any VC in the area at the time of the drops. The "safe conduct passes" can be viewed as the GVN setting the agenda by consistently informing both non-combatants (the villagers) and combatants (VC, NVA) that enemies of the GVN can defect and will be humanely treated with life and safety guaranteed (See Figures 6 and 7 for an example.)



Figure 6. Front of Safe Conduct Pass (From Chandler, 1981)<sup>110</sup>

<sup>109</sup> "2d Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period 1 July 1970–30 Jul 1970.," 3–15.

<sup>110</sup> Chandler, *War of ideas*, 74.



Figure 7. Reverse of Safe Conduct Pass (From Chandler, 1981)<sup>111</sup>

Additionally, CAPs were able to control the agenda through constant informal communications with the villagers. The CAP Marine lived in the village and established relationships with the people. Through every day communication they were able to pick up on the villagers' perspective of the Vietnamese agenda. This agenda could then be made their own (the Marines) or modified if need be.

## 5. COG 5: Attitudinal Selectivity (Segmentation)

"An individual uses an attitude selectively to make sense of the world and self."<sup>112</sup>

### a. Segmentation

"Groups of individuals with similar attitudes can be targeted with similar messages."<sup>113</sup>

Research did not reveal many specific segmentation attempts conducted by the CAP outside of separating the villagers from the VC. However, one example that can be viewed of as segmentation and which comes very close to sounding like

<sup>111</sup> Chandler, *War of ideas*, 74.

<sup>112</sup> Pratkanis, "Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis," 132.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

resettlement (which as described previously, tends to create resentment) occurred in October 1968. Platoon 1-3-5 “moved 556 families up from the lower level,” of a hillside in Chu Lai, “into our ville, and told them if they didn’t want any contact with VC we would protect them, the ones who stayed down there were considered VC sympathizers.”<sup>114</sup> In this particular case, this form of segmentation worked to the CAPs advantage, possibly because the villagers were not moved too far from home. It allowed for the platoon to ambush the VC when they came to get supplies or shelter from those who stayed behind since they had their location pinpointed, and for the CAP to focus specific messages towards specific segmented groups.<sup>115</sup>

Although not clearly evident in CAP operations, segmentation was a factor within the population during the Vietnam War. Some examples:

a) In the south, upper class Catholics (minority) represented by Diem alienated the majority, Buddhists (many of whom were in his military),<sup>116</sup> and lower class villagers (resettlement programs).<sup>117</sup> This could be one cause of the villager’s reluctance to buy-in to the South Vietnamese effort.

b) In the north, lower class support represented by Ho Chi Minh was made attractive to the lower classes in the south who felt neglected by the Diem regime.<sup>118</sup>

In COIN operations, the following guidelines should be used to address segments within a region. The first segment would be those who strongly or moderately agree with one’s side. They should be targeted with messages that attempt to strengthen their commitment. The second, neutrals, should be targeted with messages that try to

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<sup>114</sup> CPL Roosevelt Johnson, No.3679-1B-2, Oral History Collection, History and Museum Collection, HQMC.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Pike, *Viet Cong*, 72. Buddhists, who were the majority, lost faith in the Diem regime after clashes with ARVN soldiers on May 8, 1963. Results of this spread and created discontent among college students, and did not stop there.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Rural villagers were oftentimes victims of resettlement programs which were mismanaged and corrupt. Rural villagers in the Mekong delta had land taken from them by the GVN and oftentimes given to GVN officials.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 42. Ho was considered an expert at social organization.

convince them to come to one's side. The final segment, enemies, can be targeted with messages aimed at convincing them to convert (in the previous example, this would be those who failed to move up the hill with the Platoon). If that fails, a wedge approach called "chop and co-opt" may have to be used. According to Pratkanis, "chop and co-opt" is the removal of the leadership of an adversary from the situation and then the followers are co-opted to one's own cause.<sup>119</sup>

## **6. COG 6: Self-Justification**

"The tension created by dissonance thoughts produces a drive to reduce that tension and may result in a rationalization trap."<sup>120</sup>

One of the most studied theories in Social Psychology is cognitive dissonance. It is a theory that addresses how a person makes sense out of their environment and behavior, and then conducts their life a worthwhile manner.<sup>121</sup> Essentially, it applies to the feelings one has when they have two conflicting ideas, and what they should do about them. It is human nature to have a desire to reduce dissonance. Several dissonance experiments show that if a person hurts another, then he or she must justify to themselves they did it. The easiest way to justify it is to belittle the person they hurt, thereby self-justifying the reasons for causing the hurt in the first place. This can continue in a cycle that eventually leads to further aggression towards that person.<sup>122</sup>

Self-justification includes the following implications for an influence campaign during international conflicts: <sup>123</sup>

a) The spreading of rumors and disinformation can serve to resolve dissonance. For example, a rumor campaign conducted by the political party (Buddhist struggle

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<sup>119</sup> Pratkanis, "Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis," 133.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>121</sup> Elliot Aronson, "The Evolution of Cognitive Dissonance Theory: A Personal Appraisal," In *The Science of Social Influence: Advances and Future Progress*, 115–135. (Psychology Press, 2007), 117.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Pratkanis, "Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis," 134. Pratkanis identifies three other implications which are not addressed by this study.

movement) against police chief Lam attempted to discredit him amongst the villagers who were still on the fence in regards to support for the Saigon government.<sup>124</sup>

b) Aggression often conflicts with a human's view of him or herself and thus requires justification. For example, to justify their assassinations or inadvertent killings, the VC would pin a note on the assassinated political leader detailing the crimes he committed, or in the case of an innocent villager being killed—within hours a rumor campaign would be started claiming the victim was a secret GVN agent.<sup>125</sup>

c) A direct attack on belief, especially beliefs closely related to the self, can create defensiveness and thus strengthen the morale to fight. For example, a major hurdle to overcome for outside forces who are working so closely the population is to not offend their customs. LTCOL William Corson notes:

The pettiest slights to a Vietnamese by an American could invite retribution. If a Marine propositioned a married woman, or even crossed his leg at a dinner table, the insult could translate into a booby trap placed on some commonly patrolled trail, or a diagram of the CAP's compound given over to the local VC cadre.<sup>126</sup>

d) Discrepant and disagreeable information is often ignored or selectively interpreted. The leaders in the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), a member group of the NLF, were skilled at information dissemination and avoided public distribution of disagreeable messages. For example, they knew that any mention of communism instantly turned some people off and in public only used "slogans and the Party declaration—but not the purposes—will be studied."<sup>127</sup> They carefully avoided any reference to communism.

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<sup>124</sup> West, *The Village*, 7.

<sup>125</sup> Pike, *Viet Cong*, 250.

<sup>126</sup> Peterson, *The combined action platoons*, 43. In February 1967, LTCOL Corson was assigned as the III MAF Deputy Director for the Combined Action Program.

<sup>127</sup> Pike, *Viet Cong*, 141.

## 7. COG 7: Seeds of Hatred

“Propaganda is most readily accepted by those who are under threat and relatively deprived.”<sup>128</sup>

### a. *Perceived Injustice*

“The perception of an injustice is one of the strongest motivations for encouraging attacks including aggression and war.”<sup>129</sup>

Warfare is based, or created, on the feeling of perceived injustice. Whether this perception is real, imagined, or manufactured, it must be addressed in a social influence campaign.<sup>130</sup> In Vietnam, the villagers had a sense of injustice stemming from either the GVN itself, or on the other side of the spectrum, manufactured by the VC and the leaders in the north.

The following are examples of how the CAP attempted to reduce any perceived injustice using the following guidelines provided by Pratkanis.

a) Establish conflict resolution procedures that are perceived as legitimate and fair by all parties.<sup>131</sup> CAPs spent much time working with the villagers and the village chiefs during the day. Daily meetings were held between the CAP marines and the village chiefs where village chiefs would relay information and requests given to them by the villagers.<sup>132</sup> By having a system set up where the locals could talk to their traditional leaders who would then pass the information to those with a direct path to the government, the villagers could feel that they had a voice.

b) Reinforcement of principles of democracy including minority rights.<sup>133</sup> The PSYOP campaign conducted by the GVN (with U.S. guidance) pushed themes of

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<sup>128</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 134.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> CPL Michael W. Jenko, No. 3679 2-B-5, Oral History Collection, History and Museum Collection, HQMC.

<sup>133</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 135.



democracy to all targets. Some leaflets included images of the population voting sending out the message that democracy was taking hold. These leaflets also reached out to the VC and Communists in an effort to spark defection (see Figure 8).



PEOPLE IN VILLAGES AND HAMLETS VOTING FOR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES

There is a significant development that marks a decisive turning point for the people of the Republic of Vietnam in the countryside. Elections of village councils and hamlet chiefs are being carried out in accordance with democratic principles. All citizens can select their own representatives, by writing the names of their chosen candidates on their votes to elect government officials of the local administration.

Friends still remaining on the other side. The fact has proved to you that only under a democratic regime can the people actually enjoy full rights of their citizenship. Coming back to the people of South Vietnam, you will enjoy all the rights of citizenship, and the freedom to live a peaceful and happy life.

Figure 8. Leaflet Promoting Democracy (From Chandler, 1981)<sup>134</sup>

c) Provide other means to self worth than derogating a scapegoat.<sup>135</sup> The CAP attempted this in many ways, including: teaching the villagers how to build and then supply them with the materials to build new buildings, introducing a Philippine “miracle

<sup>134</sup> Chandler, *War of ideas*, 175.

<sup>135</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 135.

rice,” which doubled their crops, teaching the PFs how to be “real soldiers” who earned respect through their actions, and one interesting technique of teaching them a method of introducing fingerling fish to the rice paddies. These fish would eat the mosquito larvae keeping the villagers and their animals more healthy, burrow in the mud to aerate the rice stalks, and then eventually grew into edible or sellable sized fish.<sup>136</sup> These simple acts empowered the villagers and enabled them to make a difference in both their villages and their own personal financial situations.

d) Separate demagogues from those who may be influenced by such appeals. This was a goal of the CAP—separating the villagers in the south from the influence of the VC. One problem often encountered with this strategy occurs as soon as the “occupying” or security providing forces leave, the demagogues immediately return. In order for this to work, the soldiers would have to stay until a village was completely capable of defending itself, or until they are no longer needed; this is why many pacification programs have failed.

The previous COG, Self-Justification, and this one, Seeds of Hatred, both place a premium on social influence tactics that are focused on reconciliation. Reconciliation is extremely important in environments such as those the CAP experienced (villages) where atrocities were common and sometimes unavoidable and included family, neighbors, and close friends. A focus on both of these COGs can help the planner to develop a way to address the fact that the close geographic concentration of combat between villages, tribes, and families, during COIN operations brings about a fundamental issue of how to influence them to get along.

## **8. COG 8: Psychological Reactance**

“Coercive influence creates resentment and rebellion.”<sup>137</sup>

Psychological reactance occurs when a person feels their freedoms are threatened. It is that motivation that occurs within the individual to restore their lives or freedoms

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<sup>136</sup> Peterson, *The Combined Action Platoons*, 113.

<sup>137</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 136.

back to how they were before they were threatened. It is human nature to respond to reactance, and even though they vary, responses generally are an oppositional response (in which the target attempts to do the opposite of the fear arousing pressures), or an attempt to directly eliminate the threat to freedom. Psychological reactance can be used in propaganda campaigns to convince the target that their freedoms are being taken away by the enemy with the goal of having the target conduct attacks on them.<sup>138</sup>

Many of the resettlement programs conducted in South Vietnam caused reactance and a hatred of the U.S. The strategic hamlet program, for example, oftentimes involved relocating villagers to fortified sites. The idea was that the villagers would be free from VC harassment and they would not be influenced to support or join the VC. Additionally this program intended to starve the VC of its most valuable resource, the people. However, many villagers resented having to move from their ancestral villages and were threatened by the coercive measures used by the government. It was so unpopular with the people that it had a reverse effect and many of the villagers involved with the strategic hamlet program ended up joining the NLF, or VC.<sup>139</sup>

On the other hand, the CAP attempted to decrease reactance by purposefully not taking away the villagers freedoms. By not blatantly interfering with their freedoms, the CAP was able to create an environment where they were not threatened by the U.S. presence, but more so by the enemy-the VC.

## **9. COG 9: The Fog of Propaganda**

“Misperceptions and distortions of information are common in conflicts including wars.”<sup>140</sup>

The fog of propaganda can produce the following three effects: 1) Rumors can determine the targets behavior; 2) Confusing or ambiguous actions are usually interpreted

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<sup>138</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 136.

<sup>139</sup> James DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2007), 149.

<sup>140</sup> Pratkanis, “Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis,” 137.

within the war frame; 3) The fog or war can affect decision makers.<sup>141</sup> The CAP concept addresses all three of these. They allow for quick assessment of rumors, which creates the opportunity for a quick rebuttal if necessary. CAP breaks the war frame by showing that the U.S. is on the Vietnam side and not just there as imperialists. In the CAP, the decision maker is right there with the people, in the village, close to the rumors and reality, so the anti-U.S. frames can be easily countered. By placing the decision maker in the village, they were able to lessen the fog.

CAP leaders demonstrated the understanding of the importance of limiting distortions of information, and planned for it extensively. Prior to insertion of a platoon, the area was psychologically prepared with PSYOPs via leaflets and loudspeakers that described the CAP. After insertion, major PSYOPs themes were introduced and after a few days of observing targets, sensitive anti-VC propaganda could be introduced (see Figure 9).<sup>142</sup> Once security was established and a sense of trust created, the Marines were able to begin controlling the fog of propaganda.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>THEMES</u>	<u>EXAMPLES - LEAFLET - TAPE</u>
I-day minus 7	CAP is coming Pro-GVN	7-485-68 T7-417-68
I-day minus 3	Pro-US forces CAP is coming	7-470-68 Tape #1179
I-day minus 2	Pro-GVN Chieu Hoi	Mix #29 Tape #6
I-day minus 1	CAP is coming Pro-GVN	7-485-68 SF Tape #2
Insertion day	CAP is here CAP is here	7-86-68 Tape #1091
I-day plus 1	Rewards Paris Talks	7-250-68 T7-714-68
I-day plus 2	Chieu Hoi Pro-GVN	Mix #33 Mix #29 & #1096
I-day plus 3	CAP is here Rewards	7-96-68 T7-430-68
I-day plus 7	Pro-GVN Chieu Hoi	7-388-68 Tape #149
I-day plus 9	Paris Talks Anti-VC/NLF	7-14-68 SF Tape #5
I-day plus 11	Rewards Pro-GVN	7-250-68 Mix #29 & #1093

Figure 9. Insertion Plan (From 1st CAG Chronology NOV 1968)<sup>143</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Pratkanis, "Public Diplomacy in International Conflicts: A Social Influence Analysis," 137.

<sup>142</sup> "1st Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period 1 Nov 1968-30 Nov 1968," 5-6.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 6.

Combined Action Group command chronologies provide additional examples of the CAP controlling the information received and thereby limiting the fog of propaganda. Televisions and radios were placed in strategic households, which made PRO-GVN propaganda more available.<sup>144</sup> This worked because of the way the villages socialized. Not all villagers were able to get information from outside sources, so they depended on social interaction for outside information. The CAP Marines ensured the propaganda they received was PRO-GVN by jamming the electromagnetic spectrum and taking control frequency bands. This way, the only information coming over the airways to the villagers was PRO-GVN.<sup>145</sup>

## **B. CENTERS OF GRAVITY SUMMARY**

Pratkanis developed the nine COGs for social influence campaigns in international conflict for a traditional state on state war. This analysis takes these COGs and applies them in the context of a counterinsurgency. The biggest difference between their initial intention and this application is the extreme importance of :

a) The emphasis of Psychology of the Inevitable. This COG plays a far more important role in COIN operations than traditional warfare because of the importance of winning over the population that comes with defeating an insurgency. Populations tend to support whichever side they believe is going to win and therefore it is essential to convince them that the defeat of the insurgents will bring them peace and some sort of consistency in their lives.

b) Reconciliation. This not one of Pratkanis' identified COGs, but as stated above plays a major role in both COGs 6 (Self Justification) and 7 (Seeds of Hatred) due to the nature of COIN warfare. Based on the reality that such close warfare sometimes puts families, friends, and neighbors in conflict with each other, reconciliation should possibly be considered an additional COG.

The following chapter builds on these COGs and identifies select individual social influence tactics that should be considered when conducting COIN operations.

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<sup>144</sup> "1st Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period 1 November 1968–30 November 1968," 5–6.

<sup>145</sup> "1st Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period 1 May 1969–31 May 1969," II-11.

## **VI. SOCIAL INFLUENCE TACTICS USED IN SOUTH VIETNAM**

The social influence tactics presented throughout this study are based on scientifically tested sociological and psychological theories that have been studied for years, some for centuries. They have been applied and tested in many environments, including everyday social settings, college campuses, law enforcement, fraud cases, and more recently, military operations.<sup>146</sup> The following is a brief list of individual tactics that could be applied to COIN operations in order to provide an advantage to the war fighter. This chapter defines the tactics, discusses why they work, identifies possible threats, and (if applicable) provides an example of its use either by the CAP or against the CAP by the VC.

### **A. ALTERCASTING**

Altercasting is a tactic that places a target in a specific social role with the goal of that target behaving socially in accordance with the desired role.<sup>147</sup> There are many forms of altercasting, all of which are defined by the specific role. One, the Authority—Agent Altercast, is when someone who is or appears to be an authority casts the target into the role of being an agent of that authority figure, resulting in obedience to authority.<sup>148</sup> Another, the Expert—Unknowing Public Altercast, uses an expert (e.g., doctor, lawyer, or nuclear engineer) to cast the recipient of a message as someone not “in the know” thus requiring the expert for the information.<sup>149</sup> The important aspect of an altercast is that the target believes in their role and behaves as such.

#### **1. Why It Works**

Altercasting works because it places a target into a social role, and once a person accepts that role, a number of social pressures are brought to bear to insure the role is

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<sup>146</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, “Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations.”

<sup>147</sup> Anthony R. Pratkanis, “Altercasting as an influence tactic,” 202.

<sup>148</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 32.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

enacted. These pressures include expectations, and the formation of an identity that provides the actors with a stake in a given social system. The effectiveness of an influence attempt depends on what roles are invoked and whether or not the target fully accepts the role they are placed in.<sup>150</sup>

## **2. Potential Threats to Altercasting**

The biggest risk to altercasting occurs when the target does not assume the role intended for them.<sup>151</sup> The most common reason for this would be if the role that the target is placed in is counter to the norms of their culture.

## **3. CAP Example**

In order to maintain control of the situation, the CAPs would have to altercast the Vietnamese with whom they were working with into a role. A role the CAPs put the PFs in was “an effective agent for their own security.” CPL Roosevelt Johnson explains how this worked:

Our PF platoon 132, have become quite effective. For the latest operation, they went out themselves and collected all the intel they could and then they came back to our compound, and they sit there and they worked up all the plans down to each detail. They told how much ammo they wanted, what time they wanted to hit, and everything. The only thing the Marines had to do was coordinate the air support and go with them for morale booster because they figure we were working together.<sup>152</sup>

This action that was planned by the PFs, who, at the time the Marines arrived were not even considered a military outfit, recorded twenty VC killed. The PFs had become “an effective agent for their own security.”

## **B. COALITION FORMATION AND DISRUPTION**

Coalition Formation is based on the idea that two or more individuals or groups will join together when in competition with other individuals or groups. Whichever

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<sup>150</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, “Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations,” 147.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>152</sup> Johnson, “CPL Roosevelt Johnson, No.3679-1B-2, Oral History Collection, History and Museum Collection, HQMC.”

coalition achieves the most critical resources becomes the more attractive and winning group.<sup>153</sup> Conversely, coalition disruption seeks to destroy or neutralize coalitions advantageous to the adversary. Influence campaigns can be tailored to create beneficial coalitions or disrupt those that do not support the objective.

### **1. Why It Works**

Coalition Formation works through the pooling of resources (votes, money, arms, information, public opinion, etc.). Coalition formation can create a situation that allows for a typically peaceful resolution to conflicting interests between groups or individuals. When one group can not get what it wants, it must find some common ground with another group in order to achieve an objective over a third party. Coalitions can create bonds and interpersonal relationships that can move beyond the situation at hand and provide means to achieve other objectives.<sup>154</sup> Coalition disruption is designed to thwart the pooling of resources.

### **2. Potential Threats to Coalition Formation and Disruption**

Potential threats to coalition formation and disruption include:

- a) Developing a coalition that lacks power to achieve objectives.
- b) Selection of coalition partners that exclude other potential partners who could be useful in achieving objectives.
- c) Weak coalitions are easily divided by the adversary.<sup>155</sup>

### **3. CAP Example**

In Vietnam, there were three principle participants—the GVN/U.S., the VC/NVA, and the villagers. The object of both the GVN and the VC was to gain the trust and support of the villagers who ultimately controlled the fate of whether or not the country fell under communist rule. Whichever group could prove to be more successful at forming a coalition with the villagers would ultimately be in control of the resources and

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<sup>153</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 29.

<sup>154</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, “Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations,” 51.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.



that would lead to their goal (U.S./GVN—noncommunist, VC/NVA—communist). Additionally there were many smaller, yet equally as pertinent, coalitions at play in South Vietnam.

The CAP concept provided an excellent opportunity for coalition formation from the U.S./GVN perspective. The most provocative resources that could be offered to the villagers came in the way of security and economic stability. Those are exactly what the CAP offered. Security was provided by living within the villages and keeping the VC out. Economic stability resulted from both the security provided to the farmers, the commodity handouts,<sup>156</sup> new projects, and supplies that were given to the villagers to help them become more efficient at their trades.<sup>157</sup> These handouts and projects can be viewed as providing the necessary resources in an attempt to gain trust and form a coalition with the villagers.

Without the support of the entire military effort in Vietnam (MACV), the CAP had an issue with threat (a), in that it lacked power to achieve objectives. Oftentimes they were able to form a mutually beneficial coalition with the villagers, which helped to achieve their own objectives. However, these coalitions did little to benefit the overall objectives of the U.S. in Vietnam because the CAP was never fully supported by leaders of the Army or the JCS.<sup>158</sup>

### C. COMMITMENT TRAP

Commitment is defined as the binding of an individual to a behavior or course of action. Once a person becomes identified with a certain behavior, it is hard for that person to behave in a way that counters it. Once a commitment is secured, the likelihood

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<sup>156</sup> “2d Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period of 1 OCT 1968 - 30 NOV 1968,” 8. Commodities distributed during the months of October through November were as follows: Soap 4,943 lbs, clothing 2,381 lbs, food 2,657 lbs, school kits 300, midwife kits 10, barber kits 7, carpenter kits 8, blackboards 27, boxes of chalk 46, physical education kits 2, water pumps 7, agriculture hand tool kits 10.

<sup>157</sup> Peterson, *The combined action platoons*, 113. The fingerling fish experiment and IR8 Philippine ‘miracle rice’ are examples.

<sup>158</sup> Hemingway, *Our War Was Different*, 54-55. A letter is provided that is from GEN Westmoreland to CJCS on January 22, 1968, praising the attrition strategy being conducted, and highly criticizing the Marine effort.

that the target will comply and perform that behavior increases. This works as an influence tactic because breaking of the commitment creates a feeling of failure or not living up to one's promises.<sup>159</sup>

### **1. Why It Works**

When behavior is visible, irreversible, and perceived to be freely chosen, commitments are the strongest. Breaking that commitment produces a tension of not living up to promises within the individual and leads to loss of trust and consistency.<sup>160</sup>

### **2. Potential Threats to Commitment Trap**

The biggest threat to Commitment Trap is the chance that the target could fall into a trap, which escalates commitment to a failing course of action. Once this occurs, it is difficult to reverse because of the psychological implications of breaking a commitment.<sup>161</sup>

### **3. CAP Example**

On June 10, 1966, a dozen Marines arrived in the village of Binh Nghia. After meeting with police chief Lam, it was decided that they would build a fort in the village to allow them to patrol and provide 24-hour security for the people. Lam was determined to keep the Marine presence in the village. The only problem was the Marines could not get building supplies for weeks and would not be able to stay until they could set up some sort of shelter. "Unfazed, Lam said they could build their own defenses without outside help."<sup>162</sup> He soon called a meeting with the villagers, explained that the Marines were there to stay, and requested help to build the fort. That day the combined force of the Marines and Lam's PFs, along with the villagers set to work and built a fort, sunk a well, and provided food to the Marines.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 54.

<sup>160</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, "Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations," 54.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> West, *The Village*, 15.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 15–16.

Commitment Trap dictates that since the villagers assisted the Marines in building their fort, in the future it should be hard for them to behave in a way that is not consistent with helping out the Marines.

## **D. EFFORT JUSTIFICATION**

Effort Justification is a tactic in which the target is required to expend large amounts of effort to obtain an object. It works through the process of self justification that is created by an increased liking of the object.<sup>164</sup> Essentially the more personal interest a person has in an object or effort, the more likely they are to defend it.

### **1. Why It Works**

This tactic works through two processes, self-justification, and, humans have an effort heuristic (or rule)—the more effort it takes to produce an object, the higher that object is rated in terms of quality and liking . It has been shown that people consider themselves reasonable and are able to self-justify their actions as being viable. Additionally, the mere expectation of having to expend effort can also produce a positive attitude change.<sup>165</sup>

### **2. Potential Threats to Effort Justification**

Conducting this tactic creates the risk that if the effort required to achieve the objection is too high, the target may not put forth any effort at all. Conversely, if the effort required is too low, the target may think nothing is going to come of it, or they may become suspicious to the tactic. In either case, the influence agent must be aware of that too much or too little level of effort can cause suspicions to their intent and affect further influence opportunities.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 55.

<sup>165</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, “Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations,” 98.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

### 3. CAP Example

Since Effort Justification for the most part plays on an individual's internal emotions, it can be difficult to obtain buy-in. The buy-in the Marines desired from the villagers was support for the GVN and resistance to the communist north. Aside from the civic action programs (discussed in the previous chapter) that were set up to provide the villagers with supplies and have them build infrastructure themselves, there were some other programs set up that could have produced the process of self-justification needed to increase (at least internally) the like fullness of the GVN.

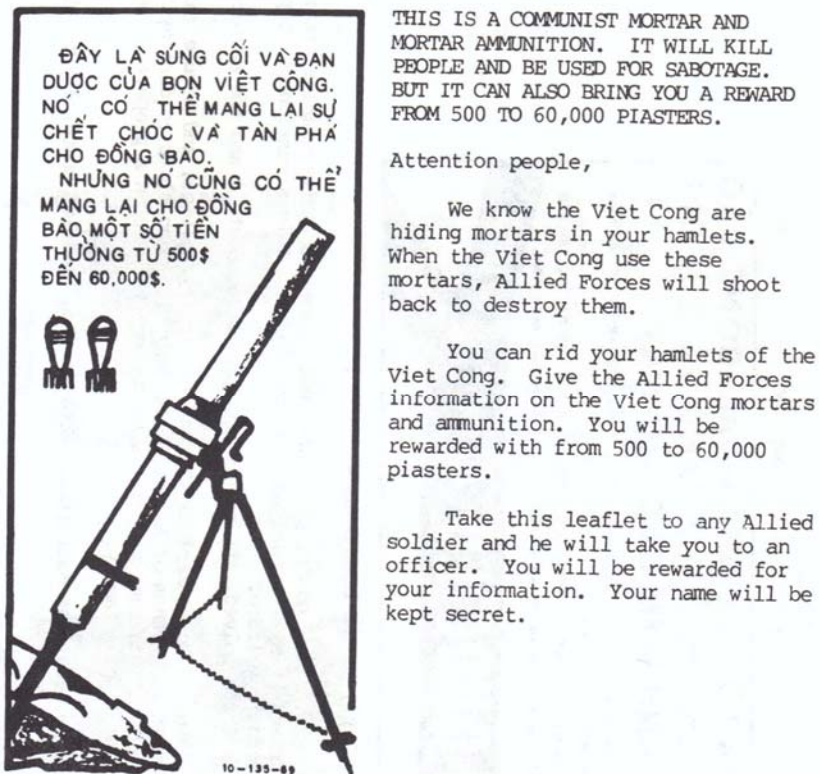


Figure 10. Information Program Leaflet (From Chandler, 1981)<sup>167</sup>

Figure 10 shows a leaflet that was used throughout South Vietnam to encourage the villagers to both provide information on the VC, and in some cases turn in ordnance for rewards. This program provided results; in the month of November, 1968, 1st CAG reported 32 separate cases of volunteer information and 13 cases of ordnance being

<sup>167</sup> Chandler, *War of ideas*, 193.

turned in.<sup>168</sup> The effort expended by the villagers who came forth with information or ordnance could have created an environment where an effort justification situation became prevalent contributing to a increased liking of the GVN.

## **E. EMPATHY**

Empathy consists of two aspects: a cognitive awareness of another person's internal states (thoughts, feelings, perceptions, intentions) and a vicarious affective response of concern and distress for another person.

### **1. Why It Works**

An individual is more likely to take an interest in helping another individual, or complying with a request from them, when they feel empathy towards their mental or physical well-being. It is even more effective when there is a working relationship with the target. Empathy can be useful in gaining conformity and causing actions consistent with the influence agent's goals.<sup>169</sup>

### **2. Potential Threats to Empathy**

If the target feels that the influence agent is responsible for creating the state of distress, or helplessness of the victim, this tactic can backfire. When this occurs it can create a situation where the target will ignore any attempts at compliance. Another risk exists if there is no way for the target to solve the problems or help reduce the amount of distress in the victim, the agent must provide a solution.<sup>170</sup>

### **3. CAP Example**

The fact that the Marines worked and lived with the PFs created a situation of empathy between the Marines and both the PFs and the villagers. "The Marines saw too much of the villagers and worked too closely with them, not to be affected by their

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<sup>168</sup> "1st Combined Action Group Command Chronology for the period 1 November 1968 - 30 November 1968," Encl. 2, 2.

<sup>169</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, "Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations," 108.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 109.

personal grief.”<sup>171</sup> The Marines patrols with the PFs also raised concerns amongst the villagers about the well being of their new friends and relatives.

The intimacy and close knit relations created by living so close, just as in any neighborhood or family environment, causes the empathy that can be exploited to one’s advantage.

## **F. FAIT ACCOMPLI: CREATING A PSYCHOLOGY OF THE INEVITABLE**

The “Fait Accompli” tactic is the process that instills in a target the belief that a certain course of action is inevitable and nothing that can be done to prevent it. This tactic induces the target to believe that the course of action is their fate, and by nature they come to accept it, and oftentimes even like it.<sup>172</sup>

### **1. Why It Works**

This tactic works because once the target audience accepts the inevitability of an outcome; he or she reconciles them self to that new reality and may also become convinced that the end result is acceptable, or even beneficial.<sup>173</sup>

### **2. Potential Threats to Creating a Psychology of the Inevitable**

Creating a Psychology of the Inevitable creates the potential for damaging credibility and/or reinvigorating the opposition. If the target is not totally sold on the inevitability of the story or the advertised outcome, credibility could be affected. Additionally, the adversary may be reinvigorated by the challenge created by the initial “Fait Accompli” statement.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> West, *The Village*, 43.

<sup>172</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 29–30.

<sup>173</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, “Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations,” 116.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

### 3. CAP Example

A problem the Marines faced was convincing the villagers that they would not face VC retribution for assisting their cause. Some villagers, by nature (self-preservation), were supporting the VC through intelligence and early warning of planned patrols because of the fear of VC retribution. The new police chief Nguyen Thang Thanh (took over after Lam's death) realized the need to put an end to his village's support for the VC. He knew he needed to convince the villagers that the VC defeat was coming. He spread the word throughout the village that "A villager could continue to work for the Viet Cong, but he was now put on notice that that penalty could be death."<sup>175</sup>

Sending this message to the villagers created a psychology of the inevitable. In other words, the villagers were coerced, or forced, into believing in the ability of the platoon to stop VC influence.

The VC was extremely effective at creating a psychology of the inevitable as well. In its propaganda campaign in the south they would note that the U.S. seems powerful, but there is no need to fear it because its forces are constantly being defeated by the Liberation Army. The VC would report victories and enemy losses even if they were made up. The theme of its messages was "the U.S. efforts are the last gasp of a dying conspiracy, so there is neither a moral nor a practical reason to support the losing and desperate Americans and their puppets."<sup>176</sup>

### G. FEAR APPEALS

A fear appeal creates a fear by linking undesired actions with negative consequences, or desired actions with the avoidance of a negative outcome.<sup>177</sup> In order for fear to be effective in changing attitudes and behavior, it must arouse intense fear, offer a specific recommendation for overcoming the fear, and the target must believe they can perform the recommendation.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> West, *The Village*, 74.

<sup>176</sup> Andrew R. Molnar, Jerry M. Tinker, and John D. Lenoir, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies* (Special Operations Research Office, 1966), 138.

<sup>177</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 50.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

## **1. Why It Works**

Normally, fear reduces a person's cognitive capacity and invokes a natural avoidance tendency to distance themselves from negative, dangerous, or harmful actions. Fear is fairly easy to generate and control, which makes it an appealing influence tactic to use. The effective influence agent provides a way to cope with the fear and this course of action, if aligned with the goals of the agent, is easy for the target to choose when faced with immense fear.<sup>179</sup>

## **2. Potential Threats to Fear Appeals**

The three threats a influence agent must be aware of when attempting to use fear appeals in an influence campaign are:

a) If the risks associated with fear appeal include making the fear so great that the target sees no alternative solution available, they may act in denial in order to cope with the fear emotion. This can occur when there is no perceived doable coping response to the fear.

b) A fear appeal can always be countered with a more dangerous fear factor that overshadows or replaces the influence effort.

c) Continued use of fear can cause fatigue and may wear-out a target audience and may result in withdrawal.

d) Fear that is not consistent with what the target observes can reduce credibility.<sup>180</sup>

## **3. CAP Example**

Fear Appeals are evident in nearly all military campaigns. In a COIN situation similar to what the CAP was involved in, it is easy to conduct influence campaigns using fear appeals. A problem with this ease is that because fear is such a strong emotion, it is

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<sup>179</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, "Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations," 122.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.



just as easy for the other side to counter it with a fear tactic of their own. This happened often during the Vietnam War with both sides using fear to influence the villagers.

The VC used fear extensively and was extremely effective using it to influence the villagers. This description of some of the tactics they used comes from Sergeant Robert Ashe, who was stationed in La Chau hamlet.

The people around La Chau are afraid of the Marines. The VC tell them we're gonna kill them or rape their wives. The VC blew up a civilian bus with a pressure mine down on the next crossroads and killed forty people. One of the wounded civilians started running away. He later said he was afraid of the Americans.<sup>181</sup>

Their effectiveness not only caused the villagers to fear the VC, but to fear the Marines because of what would happen to them.

## **H. INNUENDO**

An innuendo is a subtle or hidden suggestion of a fact usually concerning an individual's, or group's, reputation or character. Oftentimes, innuendos play a part in determining how a person views events or other people.<sup>182</sup>

### **1. Why It Works**

Innuendo drives people to develop their own opinions about a person, event, or policy based on the suggestion of fact (by the innuendo), which may or may not be true. It creates an opportunity for future influence by creating expectations that can be used to filter future information to the target to process.<sup>183</sup>

### **2. Potential Threats to Innuendo**

The biggest threat to using Innuendo as an influence tactic is the chance that the community discovers that the subtle suggestion is untrue. This can lead to credibility issues for the influence agent, and once credibility is lost, it is hard to regain. The

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<sup>181</sup> Corson, *The Betrayal*, 191.

<sup>182</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 27.

<sup>183</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, "Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations," 156.

influence agent must understand the social standing and reputation of the target (whether it be a person, group, or policy) amongst the community, or risk that community's emotional defense of the target.<sup>184</sup>

### **3. CAP Example**

The VC was an expert at using rumors and innuendo to advance their cause. For example, in August 1968, when Americans fired on a friendly hamlet after being ambushed by the VC, killing several civilians; an immediate campaign was conducted by the VC that caused anger and distrust in regards to the U.S. troops. They spread rumors that the "foreign troops" had fired without provocation and were "no better than the French."<sup>185</sup>

This example is a direct attack on the credibility of the U.S. effort, and at the same time advances the strategy of the VC of claiming the U.S. are just continuing on with their "French Imperialistic ways." Given that the VC was using this strategy, as will other adversaries, it requires counter tactics, such as DRDR, Stealing Thunder, and Forewarning to be used.<sup>186</sup>

## **I. JIGSAWING**

Jigsawing, or creating mutual interdependence, is a tactic that landscapes the situation in order to promote intergroup harmony and positive social relations. It has been shown through experiments that by creating mutual interdependence, having two groups work together on common goals, intergroup conflict can be minimized.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, "Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations," 156.

<sup>185</sup> Chandler, *War of ideas*, 179.

<sup>186</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 48-49. For a detailed discussion of these counter tactics see Pratkanis. For general application to COIN operations, see Table 1 of this thesis.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 29. This particular experiment refers to Robbers Cave research conducted by Sherif, Harvey, White, and Hood (1954).

### **1. Why It Works**

Jigsawing creates an environment where people realize that they must work together in order to get what they want. The mutual dependency created among the members of a group works to help accomplish a common goal that can be perceived by the individual as the achievement of individual goals. This process includes the additional benefits of mutual respect and understanding between the group members.<sup>188</sup>

### **2. Potential Risks to Jigsawing**

The most dangerous risk to Jigsawing is the chance that the groups placed together have such strong emotions towards each other that they either completely resist, or become violent with each other. Additionally, the groups actions must be interdependent, and they must be supplied with proper materials and enough support from authorities to ensure progress.<sup>189</sup>

### **3. CAP Example**

Documented success using Jigsawing has been achieved in classroom and office settings where the influence agent has almost constant supervision over progress. For it to work in military operations, the influence agent also must be present. This is why Jigsawing should be considered in COIN operations (where the agent is close and available), and was thought of by the CAP as stated by an organizer of CAP units CAPT R. E. Williamson.

Combined action represents a viable alternative for a variety of reasons. By combining a mutually desired goal-local security-with the opportunity for Marines and Vietnamese to work together toward that goal, a sense of partnership is created, and identity of purpose. Respect for the integrity of local command structures and preservation of local unit identity permits both esprit de Corps and a community pride to develop.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, "Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations," 167.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>190</sup> R. E. Williamson, "A Briefing For Combined Action," *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 1968, 42.

## **J. NORM OF RECIPROCITY**

Norm of Reciprocity as an influence tactic relies on the idea that when a person does a favor for another, that person (who received the favor) feels obligated to return the favor. Although it may vary with the time and place, the norm of reciprocity make two interrelated demands; people should help those who have helped them, and people should not hurt those who have helped them. The norm of reciprocity is extremely strong in some societies. For example, in the Philippines, if a man pays his *compadre's* (extended family system in the Filipino culture) doctors bill in a time of need, the latter may be (or feel) obligated to get that man's son an important job. In societies such as this, most all relations are guided by the norm of reciprocity.<sup>191</sup>

### **1. Why It Works**

Norm of Reciprocity works because society has created a norm that when a gift or favor is received, it should be reciprocated. Because of this, individuals feel compelled to return the favor in order to fulfill his or her role in society, rather than suffer internal guilt.

### **2. Potential Threats to Norm of Reciprocity**

There are many threats to using the Norm of Reciprocity, including:

a) "The credibility of the influence agent can be damaged if the target begins to feel manipulated by the exchange of gifts, favors, or actions.

b) Gifts or actions on the part of the target that are not returned by the influence agent can have a negative impact on the influence relationship. Any noncompliance on the part of the influence agent can be seen as not meeting socially acceptable criteria and create a backlash effect.

c) The relationship between influence agent and target can become one of dependency (of the target on the agent) that can foster resentment of the agent by the target. This dependency is created if the gift or favor is viewed as being bestowed from a

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<sup>191</sup> Alvin W. Gouldner, "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement," *American Sociological Review*, April 1960, 171.

superior as opposed from an equal. The dependency status makes the target feel inferior and either unable to effectively return in kind to the source of influence or resentful for the status.”<sup>192</sup>

### **3. CAP Example**

Anytime people live closely with one another and have daily interactions, the chances for implementation of the Norm of Reciprocity are present. For example, CPL Joseph Trainor points out:

About five times a week, the squad leaders had to go out to weddings, and funerals. Almost every day of the week we have to go out and eat with the people at some sort of celebrations, for everything, and they always want Marines there to show that they are welcome to whatever is going on. Myself, I’ve been to inaugurations, weddings, and wakes. They really want you to take part.<sup>193</sup>

This example is more of the results that come from using the Norm of Reciprocity. Any gift given to the village from a Marine creates compliance, and the same for gifts given from the village to the Marines. Once this process begins, a relationship is created and results in invitations as mentioned above. The openness of the villagers and the fact that they invited the Marines into their homes and to their social functions could be a result of feeling of indebtedness to them for providing them (the villagers) security from the VC, as the Norm of Reciprocity predicts.

## **K. PROJECTION**

Projection is a more specific form of innuendo in which the influence agent accuses another person or group of the negative traits and behaviors that the agent possesses and exhibits in an attempt to draw attention from their own misdeeds.

### **1. Why It Works**

Projection works for a number of reasons including:

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<sup>192</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, “Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations,” 196–197.

<sup>193</sup> Trainor, “CPL Joseph A. Trainor, No. 2202-2341-3c, Oral History Collection, History and Museum Collection, HQMC.”

- a) People tend not to suspect that others may be attempting to deceive.
- b) Most people are reluctant to expose lies and thus the projectionist gets away with it.
- c) Projection gives the perception that the projectionist is concerned about moral behavior.
- d) Projection diverts attention away from any flaws in the character and behavior of the projectionist.
- e) Once the misinformation of projection is accepted, it serves to guide future perceptions and beliefs that can then reinforce the original misinformation.<sup>194</sup>

## **2. Potential Risks to Projection**

Projection is an extremely strong tactic that plays on the target's emotions. The biggest risk involved with projection occurs when it is not countered. It is oftentimes used by authoritarian regimes, and therefore democracies like the U.S. must be aware of it and be prepared to use counter tactics.<sup>195</sup> Also, like other deceitful tactics, projection can lead to loss of credibility if it is shown to be untrue.<sup>196</sup>

## **3. CAP Example**

Projection is not a tactic that is widely used by the U.S., however, the U.S. must always be prepared to counter accusations. For example, the VC used this tactic extensively. In many cases, the VC would use projection to shift blame from their misdeeds (e.g., killing civilians, burning a village) to the Marines. All the U.S. could do was hope to recognize it, and then refute or counter the claims with other tactics.

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<sup>194</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, "Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations," 225.

<sup>195</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 18-82. Tactics such as Inoculation, Stealing Thunder, and Damn It, Refute It, Damn It, Replace It, are effective counter tactics and are covered in Chapter 2 of *The Science of Social Influence*.

<sup>196</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, "Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations," 226-227.

## **L. SELF EFFICACY**

Self Efficacy is a tactic that can be used to change a target's high-risk, defensive, and anxiety-producing behavior. It involves increasing the target's belief about their own capability to accomplish tasks or objectives.<sup>197</sup>

### **1. Why It Works**

It works because it creates an expectation of success based on the individual's perceived capability to be successful to accomplish stated goals acquired through training, guidance, and encouragement from the influence agent.

### **2. Potential Risks to Self Efficacy**

The risks associated with Self Efficacy are:

a) The influence agent changes the goals or objective after self efficacy is created within the target.<sup>198</sup>

b) The target is unable to achieve the goal or objective after self efficacy is created.

### **3. CAP Example**

In operations like those faced by the CAP it is important, even necessary, to create a belief among the peoples that they can defend themselves. If not, the counter-insurgents will never be able to leave.

In some instances, the training and the constant patrols the Marines conducted with the PFs instilled a sense of belief that the PFs could in fact defend their villages from the VC. The following is an excerpt from a Marine Headquarters handout regarding the Platoon in Binh Nghia village that was given to high ranking officers and members of the press:

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<sup>197</sup> Pratkanis, *The Science of Social Influence*, 56.

<sup>198</sup> Cone, Rayfield, and Stach, "Integrating Social Influence Tactics Into Contemporary Military Operations," 247.

The PFs are now confident of their fighting proficiency and realize they are quite capable of denying enemy access to their hamlet. In short, they have come to realize the VC can be beaten and that they are capable of doing it.<sup>199</sup>

Whether or not the PFs actually were confident in their ability is only one part of this message. By making this information public the Marines are targeting many groups.

a) The PFs—Increasing their own belief, setting an expectation that they can really defend themselves.

b) The Villagers—Setting the expectation that the PFs can defend them so they no longer need to worry (anxiety producing behavior) about the VC.

c) The VC—They might think twice before heading into Binh Nghia after news such as this spreads.

Many of these tactics can be used together or as compliments to each other to achieve one's influence goals. The influence agent should be competent in their application and risks prior to attempting the use them against a target. The following table is to be used as a tool to help the influence campaign planner determine what tactics best fit the situation he or she faces:

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<sup>199</sup> West, *The Village*, 76.



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## **VII. SUMMARY**

### **A. CONCLUSIONS**

The CAP concept was for the most part successful in depriving insurgent access to the villages, teaching the PFs how to fight, bringing out the good will of the villagers towards the Marines, and sometimes even the government. If fully backed and implemented, the CAP could have changed the course of the war by winning the hearts and minds of the villagers.

The SIA portion of this thesis helped bring forward the idea that social influence plays a major role in military operations, especially those involving close contact with civilians from another country like COIN does. As discussed in previous chapters, the most important COGs to consider during COIN operations are: COG 6—Self Justification and COG 7 - Seeds of Hatred because of the unique situation involved when combatants are sometimes related to one another. Additionally, reconciliation must be addressed when addressing the fact that relatives and neighbors are sometimes fighting each other.

Table 1 emerged after careful study into the individual tactics of social influence. This table is not the “be all know all” of social influence tactics applicable to COIN operations. Rather, a starting point for further research that could develop this table into a “pocket guide” to social influence tactics for participants in an influence campaign during COIN operations.

Native forces are engaged in the fight.	Agenda Setting <b>X</b>	Altercast <b>X</b>	Coalition Formation <b>X</b>	Commitment Trap <b>X</b>	Control the Flow of Information <b>X</b>	Effort Justification <b>X</b>	Empathy <b>X</b>	Fait Accompli <b>X</b>
Sending the message that “we are on your side” and not imperialists.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Insurgents are committing atrocities against population and blaming you.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>			<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	
Civilian support is leaning towards insurgents	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Civilians do not support/losing support for government in place.	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>			<b>X</b>			<b>X</b>
Civilians do not support your presence.								<b>X</b>
Convincing civilians you are going to stay.	<b>X</b>							<b>X</b>

Table 1. Situation/Tactic Matrix

Situation Tactics	Fear Appeals	Innuendo	Jigsawing	Norm of Reciprocity	Psychological Reactance	Set Expectations	Social Consensus/ Proof	DRDR/ Stealing Thunder/Forewarning (Counters)
Insurgents are conducting propaganda against your presence.	X	X			X	X		X
Insurgents are committing atrocities against population and blaming you.	X	X			X		X	X
Civilian support leaning towards insurgents		X					X	X
Civilians do not support/losing support for government in place.	X	X				X	X	X
Civilians do not support your presence.			X	X		X	X	X
Convincing civilians you are going to stay.				X				
Native forces are engaged in the fight.	X	X			X	X	X	
Sending the message that “we are on your side” and not imperialists.		X	X	X			X	

Table 1 (Cont.). Situation/Tactic Matrix

## **B. APPLYING A CAP CONCEPT TODAY**

The CAP concept need not be Vietnam specific. If cultural and situational similarities are considered during implementation, it is a highly flexible tactic that can be used in today's conflicts. The CAP can be useful in COIN operations as long as: the program receives recognition as a national strategy, the local forces are trained with the CAP forces before being put in a combat situation, the CAP forces are trained in cross cultural communication, the CAP forces are trained on the social influence tactics discussed in this study.

Recognition as a national strategy, means the strategy is implemented with a top down approach with support from not only specific service, but top military leaders. One of the reasons the CAP in Vietnam did not become a tactic used by the U.S. as a whole was the reluctance of the Army, and the JCS to adopt it as a viable tactic to lead to accomplishment of the overall strategy in Vietnam.

Training the local forces with the CAP prior to combat would ensure that both the CAP soldiers and the local forces are on the same page. In Vietnam, it took many months and hundreds of patrols before the combined team actually became a legitimate force. A period of training consisting of weapons familiarization, patrol tactics, and force structure would reduce this period, increasing the efficiency of the combined team.

Cross cultural communication is necessary anytime foreign forces are going to live within another population. The military today handles this well as evidenced by the number of soldiers who attend mandatory language and culture programs at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, CA, prior to duty in foreign countries.

As this study demonstrates, social influence plays an integral role in the success of military operations that involve close contact with the population of a foreign country. Training soldiers on the basics of applying social influence tactics in an operational environment will benefit both the mission and the soldier. The Marines in Vietnam did not have any such training and therefore learned them on their own, sometimes the hard

way. If today's soldier could be trained (even just a familiarization course) on the science of social influence before participating in COIN operations, he will be better equipped for success.

### **C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

#### **1. Additional Research on the Social Influence Tactics Used by the Viet Cong**

While conducting research on the CAP, several instances of the VCs use of the science of social influence were discovered. This thesis only touched on a handful of them. A complete Social Influence Analysis on their tactics could provide useful data, and an insight into what tactics were used to counter the U.S.'s, and provide additional tactics that are applicable to COIN operations.

#### **2. Research on What Requirements or Standards Are Necessary to Educate Today's Soldier in the Field of Operational Social Influence**

While conducting research, many instances were identified where CAP leaders and Marines noted that cultural training was lacking. Today before heading into a foreign country, training is essentially the same as it was during Viet Nam; a quick language course, and a day or two on customs; this just does not cut it. To be successful, the soldier needs more than this, and if COIN operations are involved (as most conflicts today) an understanding of the science of social influence in the context of cross cultural communications should be mandatory. A recommendation is a school taught by a CAP expert (Nagl, for example), locals (Afghan civilians, if, by chance the soldiers are headed to Afghanistan for operations), and a Social Psychologist. Having a schoolhouse headed and taught by a mix of these three types of people would benefit COIN Operators.

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